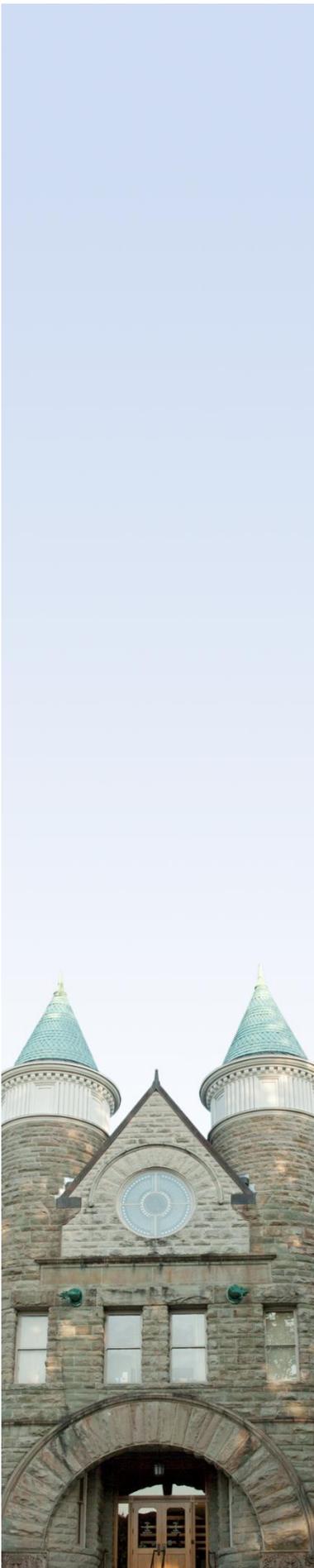

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Online Learning Annual Report 2011–12

January 2013



Randy I. Dorn
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

Randy I. Dorn
Superintendent
of Public
Instruction

Ken Kanikeberg
Chief of Staff

Peter Tamayo
Chief
Information
Officer

Report to the Legislature

Online Learning Annual Report 2011–12

Prepared by:

Karl Nelson, Director, Digital Learning Department

Digital Learning Department

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Karl Nelson, Director

OSPI provides equal access to all programs and services without discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. Questions and complaints of alleged discrimination should be directed to the Equity and Civil Rights Director at (360) 725-6162 or P.O. Box 47200 Olympia, WA 98504-7200.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	8
Online Provider Approval.....	8
Student and Course Totals.....	8
Demographics	9
Course Enrollment Patterns.....	9
Non-Resident Students.....	9
Assessment	10
Completion and Passing Rates.....	10
Withdrawal and Graduation Rates	10
Teacher/Student Ratios	11
Student Support.....	11
Recommendations	11
Introduction	12
Acknowledgments	12
Process	13
Definitions.....	13
Data Sources	14
Provider Reviews.....	16
Background	16
Approval Process	17
Results.....	18
Rescindment	20
Alternate Paths to Approval for Online School Programs	20
Student and Course Totals.....	21
CEDARS.....	21
Alternative Learning Experiences	22
Digital Learning Department	23
Student Demographics	23
Gender	23
Ethnicity	24
Transitional Bilingual.....	25
Special Education	25
Part-Time Homeschooled Students.....	27
Course Enrollment Patterns.....	28
Part-Time and Full-Time Course Enrollment Patterns.....	28
Subjects.....	32

Course Level	34
Grade Level	34
Student Motivation	36
Payment	37
Non-Resident Students	38
Online Learning in the ALE Context	40
Assessment	45
Students Tested	45
Assessment Results	49
Student Achievement: Completion, Passing, and Grades	59
Completion Rates	59
Pass Rates	61
Grades	63
Withdrawal and Graduation Rates	67
Teacher/Student Ratios	69
Student Satisfaction Survey	71
Demographics	71
Results	75
Trends	85
Provider Changes	85
Student Support	85
Recommendations	87
Conclusions	88
Appendices	89
Appendix A: Online Student Demographics	89
Appendix B: ALE Enrollment	89
Appendix C: Non-Resident Student Enrollment	89
Appendix D: Assessment Results	89
Appendix E: Student Achievement	89
Appendix F: Certificated Instructional Staff (CIS) Ratios	89

List of Tables

Table 1: Known Online School Programs.....	15
Table 2: Approved Providers.....	18
Table 3: CEDARS Online Activity by School Year.....	22
Table 4: Gender in Online Students, Washington, 2011–12	24
Table 5: Ethnicity in Online Students, Washington, 2011–12	24
Table 6: Percentage of Online Students in Special Education in Schools With Over 100 Students Enrolled in Online Courses	25
Table 7: Number of Online Courses Taken, 2011–12	29
Table 8: Part-Time and Full-Time Online Students.....	30
Table 9: ALE Digital/Online FTE and Headcount, 2011–12.....	31
Table 10: ALE Digital/Online Monthly FTE Enrollment and Headcount	32
Table 11: Online Course Enrollment by Subject Area.....	32
Table 12: Online Enrollment in DLD Courses by Subject Area.....	33
Table 13: Online Enrollment in DLD Courses by Level.....	34
Table 14: Online Students by Grade Level (CEDARS), 2011–12.....	35
Table 15: Number of Students in DLD Online Courses by Grade, 2011–12	36
Table 16: Student Motivation for Taking DLD Courses.....	36
Table 17: Payment Source for DLD Online Courses.....	37
Table 18: Non-Resident Headcount, ALE, 2010–11	39
Table 19: Resident Districts of ALE Students Enrolled in Non-Resident Districts.....	40
Table 20: ALE Total FTEs	42
Table 21: 2011–12 ALE FTEs by Grade.....	43
Table 22: 2011–12 ALE FTEs by Location	44
Table 23: Differential Funding by Program Type and FTE	44
Table 24: Assessments Taken by School Grade	45
Table 25: Reading, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12.....	46
Table 26: Math, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12	47
Table 27: Writing, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12.....	48
Table 28: Science, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12.....	49
Table 29: Reading, Percent of Students that Met Standard, 2011–12.....	51
Table 30: Reading, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year	51
Table 31: Math, Percent of Students that Met Standard, 2011–12.....	53
Table 32: Math, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year	54
Table 33: Writing, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, 2011–12	55
Table 34: Writing, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year	56
Table 35: Science, Percent of Students that Met Standard, 2011–12.....	58
Table 36: Science, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year	58
Table 37: Course Completion Rates For Large Online Programs (more than 500 enrollments)..	61

Table 38: Course Completion and Pass Rates From 2009–10 to 2011–12.....	62
Table 39: Course Pass Rates by School, 2011–12.....	62
Table 40: Grading Scale.....	63
Table 41: Percentage of Grades Earned, 2011–12.....	64
Table 42: Percentage of Grades Earned in Online Courses by Year.....	65
Table 43: Withdrawal Codes for 2011–12 Students in Grade 12.....	68
Table 44: Certificated Instructional Staff (CIS) per 1,000 Students by ALE Program Type.....	70
Table 45: CIS Ratios for ALE Digital/Online Programs With More Than Five FTE CIS.....	70
Table 46: Satisfaction Survey Enrollment Status.....	71
Table 47: Satisfaction Survey Grade Levels.....	72
Table 48: Satisfaction Survey Respondents.....	73
Table 49: Satisfaction Survey Provider Response Rates and Average Ratings.....	74
Table 50: Overall Satisfaction.....	75
Table 51: Ease of Enrollment.....	76
Table 52: Resolution of Enrollment Issues.....	77
Table 53: Ease of Starting.....	78
Table 54: Course Met Academic Needs.....	79
Table 55: Well-Served by Online Teacher.....	80
Table 56: Ease of Use.....	81
Table 57: Assistance With Time Mangement.....	82
Table 58: Helpfulness of Technical Support.....	83
Table 59: Student Would Take Another Online Course.....	84

List of Figures

Figure 1: Gender in Online Students, Washington, 2011–12.....	23
Figure 2: Ethnicity in Online Students, Washington, 2011–12.....	24
Figure 3: Number of Online Courses Taken, 2011–12.....	29
Figure 4: ALE Digital/Online FTE, 2011–12.....	30
Figure 5: ALE Digital/Online Monthly FTE Enrollment.....	31
Figure 6: Online Students by Grade Level (CEDARS), 2011–12.....	34
Figure 7: Number of Students in DLD Online Courses by Grade, 2011–12.....	35
Figure 8: Spending on DLD Courses per School, 2011–12.....	37
Figure 9: Non-Resident Headcount, ALE, 2011–12.....	39
Figure 10: ALE Total FTEs.....	41
Figure 11: 2011–12 ALE FTEs by Grade.....	42
Figure 12: 2011–12 ALE FTEs by Location.....	43
Figure 13: Differential Funding by Program Type.....	44
Figure 14: Reading, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12.....	45
Figure 15: Reading, Percent of Online Students Tested by Year.....	46
Figure 16: Math, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12.....	47
Figure 17: Writing, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12.....	48

Figure 18: Science, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12	48
Figure 19: Reading, Percent of Students that Met Standard Without Previous Pass, 2011–12 ..	50
Figure 20: Reading, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, 2011–12	50
Figure 21: Reading, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year	51
Figure 22: Math, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Without Previous Pass, 2011–12.....	52
Figure 23: Math, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, 2011–12	52
Figure 24: Math, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year	53
Figure 25: Writing, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Without Previous Pass, 2011–12 .	54
Figure 26: Writing, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, 2011–12	55
Figure 27: Writing, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year	56
Figure 28: Science, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Without Previous Pass, 2011–12 ..	57
Figure 29: Science, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, 2011–12	57
Figure 30: Science, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year	58
Figure 31: Percentage of Grades Earned, 2011–12	64
Figure 32: Percentage of Grades Earned in Online Courses by Year	65
Figure 33: Satisfaction Survey Enrollment Status.....	71
Figure 34: Satisfaction Survey Grade Levels	72
Figure 35: Satisfaction Survey Respondents.....	73
Figure 36: Overall Satisfaction	75
Figure 37: Ease of Enrollment	76
Figure 38: Resolution of Enrollment Issues	77
Figure 39: Ease of Starting	78
Figure 40: Course Met Academic Needs.....	79
Figure 41: Well-Served by Online Teacher	80
Figure 42: Ease of Use.....	81
Figure 43: Assistance With Time Mangement.....	82
Figure 44: Helpfulness of Technical Support	83
Figure 45: Student Would Take Another Online Course	84

Executive Summary

ONLINE PROVIDER APPROVAL

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has conducted one approval review cycle since the January 2012 report to the Legislature. Five providers were approved (out of five applicants) during the spring 2012 approval cycle. The newly approved providers are:

- Accelerate Education/Accelerate Online Academy
- Everett OnlineHS.net
- Ignite Education Group
- Peninsula Internet Academy
- Walla Walla High

A complete list of approved providers is available at:
<http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/providers/>.

STUDENT AND COURSE TOTALS

According to district data submitted to Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), 19,891 students took at least one online course in 2011–12. This is 6.7 percent higher than the 2010–11 figure of 18,649 students.

Students took a total of 66,048 K–12 online courses in 2011–12, an 8.5 percent decrease from the 72,180 enrollments in the previous year.

A total of 215 schools in 123 districts reported online course enrollment, a 47.3 percent and 38.2 percent increase, respectively, over the 2010–11 figures of 146 schools in 89 districts. In previous years, we have suggested that increases in the reported online course activity were partially due to improved reporting and partially due to actual increases in activity. This is likely still the case with the 2011–12 figures, although the sharp increase in the number of schools and districts reporting activity, without a corresponding increase in student headcount or course enrollments, suggests that online learning options are available in many more districts than before, but that fewer students in each school are making use of the opportunities.

Districts reported the following for “digital/online” Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs in 2011–12:

- Annual average headcount: 10,275.0
- Annual average FTE: 8,433.0

Both the headcount and FTE were lower than 2010–11, by 8.7 percent and 6.1 percent respectively. A total of 102 ALE programs categorized themselves as “digital/online”, compared to 95 in 2010–11, a 7.4 percent increase.

School districts can purchase access to individual online courses through OSPI’s Digital Learning Department (DLD) online course catalog. During 2011–12, 1,333 students enrolled in 2,665 courses. Enrollments came from 88 schools in 71 different school districts.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Female students are slightly over-represented among students taking online courses, as compared to the population of non-online K–12 students in the state. Female students made up 52.2 percent of the online student population in 2011–12 (from CEDARS), compared to 48.2 percent of the non-online student population.

As compared to the non-online student population, White students are significantly over-represented amongst online students with 73.4 percent in the online category and 59.7 percent in the non-online population.

Of the 19,891 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 117 (0.59 percent) were marked as transitional bilingual students. Although transitional bilingual students represent 8.09 percent (90,391) of non-online student population, this represents an increase over the 2010–11 rate of 0.26 percent (109) of transitional bilingual online students.

Of the 19,891 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 1,305 (6.6 percent) were students in special education. Among non-online students in the state, 14.0 percent (156,476) were in special education.

Of the 19,891 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 900 (4.5 percent) were enrolled part-time in a public school district and were also homeschooled. In comparison, only 0.5 percent of non-online students, or 5,208 total, were part-time homeschooled and part-time enrolled in the public school system.

COURSE ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

High school students make up 76.6 percent of the online student population—a rate virtually unchanged from the 2010–11 total count of 76.5 percent.

The majority of online students do not take all of their coursework online. Sixty-seven percent of high school students taking online courses took fewer than five courses during the 2011–12 school year. (The rate of students taking fewer than five courses rose from 55 percent in 2010–11.) Only 13.8 percent of students took enough (ten or more) courses to be considered full-time for the entire school year.

The most popular online course subject areas, as recorded in CEDARS, were English Language Arts (17.1 percent), Math (15.1 percent), Physical Health and Safety Education (11.0 percent), History (10.7 percent), and Science (10.7 percent).

NON-RESIDENT STUDENTS

Based on the non-resident district data submitted by online ALE programs, an average annual headcount of 6,903.3 students were enrolled in a “digital/online” ALE program in a district other than their resident district. In order to do this, some students completely transferred to a non-resident district. In other cases, a student’s resident district contracted with a non-resident district to allow the student to split their coursework between two districts. Based on the total annual average headcount, non-resident students represented 67.2 percent of students enrolled in online ALE programs, a percentage virtually unchanged from the prior year. The annual average non-resident FTE was 6,216.0, representing 73.7 percent of all online ALE FTE.

Ten school districts gained more than 100 non-resident FTE.

Of the 295 districts in the state, 255 had resident students enroll in non-resident districts to take digital/online ALE courses. Sixteen school districts had more than 100 FTE leave the district. However, most districts saw smaller losses. Of the 255 districts, 182 (71.4 percent) had fewer than 25 FTE transfer to another district.

ASSESSMENT

Scores on the state assessments, the Measurements of Student Progress (MSP), High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), and end-of-course (EOC) exams, can help gauge the effectiveness of online school programs.

After seeing significant improvements in the rate of students tested from 2009–10 to 2010–11, the rates fell for students taking the reading MSP/HSPE in all grades except 10th grade.

Students in online school programs met standard on the assessment at a lower rate than the state average; the subject areas with the smallest gaps were reading (7.3 percent gap), writing (9.3 percent gap), and biology (10.6 percent gap). The gaps were more significant in the subjects of math and science. Online students taking the science MSP met standard 18.4 percent lower than the state average; online students taking the math MSP met standard at a rate 22.9 percent lower; and students in the math EOC exam were 24.3 percent lower. (Comparisons are for the percentage of students who met standard, excluding those with no score.)

COMPLETION AND PASSING RATES

Of the 60,273 online courses where CEDARS has grade history data, 90.1 percent (54,296) were completed. By comparison, students completed 97.0 percent of the 3,688,830 non-online course enrollments with CEDARS grade history data.

Of the 54,296 completed courses, 62.8 percent passed with a C- or better and 75.4 percent passed with a D or better. Statewide, of the total 3,577,627 completed non-online courses reported in CEDARS, 83.4 percent passed with a C- or better and 92.2 percent passed with a D or better. Note that the pass rate calculation is based on *completed* courses, as dropped or withdrawn courses are removed from the equation.

WITHDRAWAL AND GRADUATION RATES

Graduation rates for 2011–12 will not be finalized until after the writing of this report, due to the process by which both districts and OSPI verify and analyze the data. We do have graduation rate data available from 2010–11, but this data set should be used with some caution. Of the online programs identified, the adjusted actual four-year cohort graduation rate (for those programs with graduates) varied from 8.8 percent to 40.0 percent.

As a result of the limitations of graduation rates, we examined withdrawal codes for twelfth graders taking online courses. In the online students' data set, 1,266 twelfth grade students took at least one online course. Of those, 430 (34.0 percent) had a year-end status that indicated a successful outcome, such as graduation or completion of an individualized education program. Of the 111,437 twelfth grade students who had not taken an online course, 65,688 (58.9 percent) had a successful outcome.

TEACHER/STUDENT RATIOS

ALE programs are required to report the number of certificated instructional staff (CIS) in each program, and their ratio of CIS per 1,000 students is calculated.

In non-ALE settings, districts are required to maintain a ratio of 46 CIS per 1,000 students across the entire district. ESHB 2065 (2011) exempted ALE programs from this ratio, but the figure remains useful when comparing online programs to traditional programs. Digital/online programs are staffing, on average, at 42.7 CIS per 1,000 students. Most of the large online school programs staff at a level below the non-ALE 46/1,000 standard.

STUDENT SUPPORT

OSPI has consistently expressed concern about the gap between online and non-online student performance and, as a result, has worked to better understand the key factors that affect student success in online learning, especially those factors that centered on student support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data and analysis presented in this report, three recommendations are provided below:

First, online providers, including online school programs, should continue to focus on student support. We believe that student support is one of the key factors that lead to student success.

Second, the Legislature should restore full funding to ALE. The funding cut enacted by ESHB 2065 is scheduled to end after the 2011–13 biennium, and the ALE enrollments should be fully funded.

Finally, the Legislature should act to reform ALE. Although not covered in this report, the State Auditor's Office (SAO) has found approximately \$26 million in questioned costs in ALE programs. Although the bulk of the programs examined by SAO were not in the digital/online category, the fact remains that all ALE is in need of an overhaul. ALE reform needs to:

- 1) Improve fiscal and academic accountability for ALE programs,
- 2) Provide districts with flexibility to offer a variety of educational options to their students, especially at-risk students, and
- 3) Lessen the administrative burden of school districts by tailoring the programmatic, documentation, and reporting requirements to each specific delivery model of ALE.

State Superintendent Randy I. Dorn is proposing, along with the restoration of full funding, several ALE reforms that he believes will put ALE in a position to successfully meet student needs while maintaining accountability. We recommend that the Legislature act on his proposal.

Introduction

Online learning continues to play an important role in the state’s education landscape. Online courses provide both students and schools with much needed flexibility. They allow students to enroll in courses that are otherwise not available, ensuring that students are able to earn credits needed for graduation. They also provide schools with a wide array of educational options to meet student needs. Online school programs also provide students with an important alternative to traditional classrooms, assisting students who seek remediation or acceleration in their learning, meeting the needs of students with different learning styles, and providing flexibility for students in a variety of circumstances. It is not, however, the right option in every situation and the student achievement results show there is cause for ongoing concern in this area. As a result, online providers, school districts, and state policymakers should continue to craft a system that ensures student success.

The Washington State Legislature, in 2009, declared their support and encouragement for online learning (Substitute Senate Bill 5410, RCW [28A.250.005](#)). The Legislature also found that there was a need to assure quality and accountability in the field, and they directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop an online provider approval system and report annually on the state of online learning in Washington. Specifically, OSPI was directed to:

Beginning January 15, 2011, and annually thereafter, submit a report regarding online learning to the state board of education, the governor, and the legislature. The report shall cover the previous school year and include but not be limited to student demographics, course enrollment data, aggregated student course completion and passing rates, and activities and outcomes of course and provider approval reviews. (RCW [28A.250.040](#) (3))

As requested, this report covers:

- The provider approval process and results.
- Student demographics.
- Student achievement (statewide assessment results and course performance).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge the many OSPI employees who have contributed to this report, including Deb Came, Susan Canaga, Judy Decker, Sheri Dunster, Jeff Katims, Becky McLean, Irene Namkung, Dan Netzer, Nate Olson, Susan Quattrociocchi, Shaylah Seymour, Leslie St. Pierre, and Ryan Todd.

In addition, many staff, at school districts and online providers, worked hard to ensure accurate data. Without this foundational piece, a report such as this one would not be possible.

Process

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this report, an “**online course**” is one where:

- More than half of the course content is delivered electronically using the Internet or other computer-based methods, and
- More than half of the teaching is conducted from a remote location through an online course learning management system or other online or electronic tools.

An “**online school program**” is defined as a school or program that offers:

- Courses or grade-level coursework that are delivered primarily electronically using the Internet or other computer-based methods. The program must have a component that features online lessons and tools for student and data management.
- Courses or grade-level coursework that are taught by a teacher primarily from a remote location using online or other electronic tools. Note that access to the teacher may be synchronous or asynchronous.
- A “**sequential program**” consists of a set of courses or coursework that may be taken by a student in a single school term or throughout the school year in a manner that could provide a full-time basic education program if so desired by the student. Students may enroll in the program as part-time or full-time students.

“**Online course providers**” offer individual “**online courses**” and have the following characteristics:

- More than half of the course content is delivered electronically using the Internet or other computer-based methods.
- More than half of the teaching in the course is conducted from a remote location through an online course learning management system or other online or electronic tools.
- Online course providers must supply all of the following: course content, access to a learning management system, and online teachers.
- Online courses can be delivered to students at school as part of the regularly scheduled school day.
- Online courses can be delivered to students, in whole or in part, independently from a regular classroom schedule and must comply with RCW [28A.150.262](#) to qualify for state basic education funding as an Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) program.

This report uses a number of terms to refer to students:

- “**Headcount**” measures each unique student served.
- A “**full-time equivalent**” (FTE) is a measurement of student enrollment for funding purposes. It provides an accurate estimate of the portion of time a student is served by a given program, with 1.0 referring to a full-time student.

- A “**course enrollment**” refers to a single student enrolled in a single course for a single term. For example, a single student taking a full load of courses would have ten (if the district offers five periods a day) or twelve course enrollments (if six periods are offered) for the school year.

DATA SOURCES

This report makes use of three main data sources: the monthly ALE enrollment report, the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), and the Digital Learning Department’s (DLD) registration system.

ALE Enrollment

The Legislature included a budget proviso (House Bill 1087, Part XIV, Section 1401 (1)(a)(ii)) with the 2011–13 operating budget directing OSPI to collect and report a monthly headcount and FTE enrollments for students in Internet ALE programs, as well as information about resident and serving districts.

This data source provides information on interdistrict “choice” transfers and FTE funding measurements, in addition to headcounts.

School districts needed to complete this report as a part of the enrollment reporting for apportionment. As a result, we have a high degree of confidence in the quality of the enrollment figures, especially as compared to years prior to 2010–11.

Other aspects of this data set are less firm; in particular, the categorization of program type. ALE programs are able to self-categorize as either digital/online, parent partnership, or contract-based. And, although the majority of programs listed as digital/online on the ALE monthly report do indeed offer courses that meet the definition of an online course, some programs that self-report under this category are offering access to online curriculum—not online courses. Therefore, the ALE enrollment data may show an inflation of true online course activity. In addition, we found one instance of a large program that changed its categorization for the 2011–12 school year: Valley School District’s Columbia Virtual Academy (CVA). Prior to this year, CVA had been reporting as a parent partnership, but in 2011–12 they reported as a digital/online program. Although CVA does offer some online course options, we have seen little evidence of a dramatic increase in online enrollments (especially in Valley School District’s K–8 CVA program) or a model shift that would indicate that CVA is primarily online. As a result, we have re-classified CVA as a parent partnership.

The ALE data set used in this report was generated on December 3, 2012.

CEDARS

Districts report enrollment and high school grades earned data to OSPI through the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). Online courses are designated as such, so that CEDARS may be queried for information about students who have taken high school level online courses.

The reporting standards required by RCW [28A.250.040](#) (2), requiring districts to designate online courses, came into effect with the 2010–11 school year. We have expressed some concerns regarding data quality in the past. As we stated last year, we believe that districts

greatly improved their reporting in 2010–11. The data quality appears to be consistent in 2011–12.

There is concern that some districts offering online courses may not have designated them as such, and other districts may have incorrectly designated non-online courses as online courses. Many non-online courses, such as those involving online curriculum but lacking an online teacher, are often referred to as “online,” even though they do not meet the definition. Common examples of these computer-based, curriculum-only courses include products from NovaNet, OdysseyWare, and several other companies. So, it is quite possible for districts to report these non-online courses as online.

The CEDARS data set includes both students who were enrolled in courses designed as online and students enrolled in schools that are known to be online school programs. In order to qualify as a “known online school program,” the school must offer only online courses (and not face-to-face courses) and the individual district must report data for the program as a stand-alone school. As a number of online school programs are combined with other brick-and-mortar programs (such as alternative schools or parent partnerships), some known online schools were not included in this method.

The known online school programs are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Known Online School Programs

School	District
Bethel Online Academy	Bethel
Columbia Tech High	White Salmon Valley
Insight School of Washington	Quillayute Valley
Internet Academy	Federal Way
iQ Academy Washington	Evergreen (Clark)
Marysville On-line Move Up Program	Marysville
NW Allprep	Toppenish SD
Tyee Online Alternative School	Okanogan
Vancouver Virtual Learning Academy	Vancouver
Washington Virtual Academy (Elementary)	Omak
Washington Virtual Academy (High School)	Monroe
Washington Virtual Academy (High School)	Omak
Washington Virtual Academy (K–8)	Steilacoom Historical
Washington Virtual Academy (Middle School)	Omak
Yakima Online	Yakima

When reporting data for all online students in CEDARS, we are counting each student individually. This means that if a student was enrolled in more than one school, the student will be counted only once using the most recent demographic information. Counting students in multiple schools yields a total student count of 20,198—307 students higher than the statewide total of 19,891.

The CEDARS data set used in this report was generated on December 7, 2012.

OSPI's Digital Learning Department

The Digital Learning Department (DLD) data set includes information about students who were enrolled in individual online courses through the DLD's course catalog and registration system.

Provider Reviews

BACKGROUND

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) [28A.250.020](#) directed OSPI to create a set of approval criteria, an approval process, an appeal process, and a monitoring and rescindment process for multidistrict online providers. As a result, OSPI developed WAC [392-502](#) to outline these criteria and processes. The Online Learning Advisory Committee (OLAC), appointed by Superintendent Randy I. Dorn, assisted and advised throughout this development.

Since the 2011–12 school year, school districts may claim state basic education funding, to the extent otherwise allowed by state law, for students enrolled in online courses or programs only if the online courses or programs are:

- Offered by an approved multidistrict online provider; or
- Offered by a school district online learning program if the program serves students who reside within the geographic boundaries of the school district, including school district programs in which fewer than ten percent of the program's students reside outside the school district's geographic boundaries; or
- Offered by a regional online learning program where courses are jointly developed and offered by two or more school districts or an educational service district through an interdistrict cooperative program agreement.

Through Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2065, the Legislature amended RCW [28A.250.060](#) during the 2011 session to broaden the approval requirement beyond just multidistrict providers:

Beginning with the 2013–14 school year, school districts may claim state funding under RCW [28A.150.260](#), to the extent otherwise allowed by state law, for students enrolled in online courses or programs only if the online courses or programs are offered by an online provider approved under RCW [28A.250.020](#) by the superintendent of public instruction. (ESHB 2065, Section 8)

OSPI has updated the online learning rules (WAC [392-502](#)) and the approval process to incorporate the new requirements of ESHB 2065.

Accordingly, beginning with the 2013–14 school year, all online school programs must be approved, regardless of the rate at which they serve students residing outside the geographic boundaries of the school district.

Three Categories of Online Provider

In order to be subject to approval, a provider must be considered an online school program, an online course provider, or an online program provider.

- **Online school program:** This is a district-run online school that offers online courses in a sequential program—a set of courses or coursework that may be taken in a single school term or throughout the school year in a manner that could provide a full-time basic education program, if so desired by the student. Students may enroll in the program as part-time or full-time students.
- **Online course provider:** This is a company, non-profit organization, or school district that provides individual online courses.
- **Online program provider:** This is a company, non-profit organization, or school district that provides a complete online school program—content, technology platform, and teachers—to districts.

The criteria, assurances, and approval process are identical for all providers, regardless of the category that applies to them. And, a single provider can qualify as more than one type of provider.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Approval Reviewers and Scoring

OSPI uses contracted external reviewers to score applications.

Ten reviewers participated in the spring 2012 review process. To protect the integrity of the process, OSPI has not released the names of the reviewers.

All the reviewers participated as reviewers in previous review cycles. In earlier review cycles, the reviewers underwent extensive training in preparation for their reviews and scoring. All reviewers participated in additional refresher training on changes to approval eligibility, to the criteria, and to the review process.

The reviewers scored each application against the 54 criteria, with each item worth a single point. Applicants must have provided evidence to show the reviewer that they met the criteria. Reviewers could score an item 0, .5, or 1. Applicants draw on many sources for this evidence, including sample courses, written policies, and other documents. The DLD provides applicants with extensive feedback on their application, including written comments from the reviewers.

Process Changes

After each review cycle, OSPI staff, working with the Online Learning Advisory Committee, updates the criteria based on feedback from applicants and reviewers. Minor language edits were made to the approval criteria between fall 2011 and spring 2012 approval cycles. A compilation of all changes to the criteria can be found on the department's Changes to the Criteria Web page: <http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/approval/process/criteria/changes.php>.

As a part of the WAC 392-502 rule changes made in 2012, OSPI instituted a more formal criteria change process. This new process was in effect during fall 2012 in preparation for the review cycle that will begin January 1, 2013. In October, OSPI presented proposed changes to the

approval process and criteria for public comment. In addition, OSPI staff conducted approximately 15 hours of facilitated feedback sessions with approval reviewers to examine each of the 54 approval criteria and 16 assurances. OSPI staff reviewed all feedback and posted the final criteria and assurances, which are available at: <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/process/criteria/>.

Provider Technical Assistance

OSPI offered a series of webinars for online providers to learn about the approval options available, the processes, assurances, and criteria. Additionally, OSPI staff in the DLD continued to answer questions that applicants had throughout the application period through online and in-person meetings, phone calls, and emails.

RESULTS

In order to be approved, providers were required to meet or exceed a cut score of 46 points (85 percent of 54 possible points). The cut score was set in consultation with OLAC.

Spring 2012 Approval Cycle

Five providers were approved (out of five applicants) during the spring 2012 approval cycle. The approved providers are:

- Accelerate Education/Accelerate Online Academy
- Everett OnlineHS.net
- Ignite Education Group
- Peninsula Internet Academy
- Walla Walla High School

Approved Providers

To date, there are a total of 32 approved providers including 17 online course providers, 13 program providers, and 17 online school programs.

Table 2: Approved Providers

Provider Name	District or Company	Provider Type	Approval Date
Accelerate Education/Accelerate Online Academy	Private Company	Online Course Provider	Spring 2012
Advanced Academics	Private Company	Online Course and Program Provider	Fall 2011
Apex Learning	Private Company	Online Course and Program Provider	Fall 2011
Aventa Learning	Private Company	Online Course and Program Provider	Spring 2011
Brigham Young University Independent Studies	Private Company	Online Course Provider	Fall 2011

Continued on page 19

Table 2: Approved Providers (Continued)

Provider Name	District or Company	Provider Type	Approval Date
Columbia Tech High School	White Salmon Valley	Online School Program	Fall 2010
Columbia Virtual Academy	Multiple Districts	Online School Program	Fall 2010
DigiPen Institute of Technology–Online Academies	Private Company	Online Course Provider	Spring 2010
EdOptions Online Academy	Private Company	Online Course and Program Provider	Spring 2010
Everett OnlineHS.net	Everett	Online School Program	Spring 2012
Ignite Education Group	Private Company	Online Program Provider	Spring 2012
Internet Academy at Truman High School	Federal Way	Online School Program and Course Provider	Fall 2011
Florida Virtual School	Florida	Online Course and Program Provider	Spring 2011
Giant Campus of Washington	Private Company	Online Course and Program Provider	Fall 2010
Greenways Academy	Private Company	Online Course and Program Provider	Fall 2011
Insight School of Washington	Quillayute Valley	Online School Program	Spring 2011
iQ Academy of Washington	Evergreen	Online School Program	Fall 2010
K12, Inc.	Private Company	Online Program Provider	Spring 2011
Marysville On-line Virtual Education Program	Marysville	Online School Program	Fall 2010
National Connections Academy	Private Company	Online Course and Program Provider	Fall 2010
Northwest Allprep	Private Company	Online Program Provider	Spring 2011
Olympia Regional Learning Academy (iConnect Academy)	Olympia	Online School Program	Spring 2010
Peninsula Internet Academy	Peninsula	Online School Program	Spring 2012
Red Comet	Private Company	Online Course Provider	Spring 2011
Spokane Virtual Learning	Spokane	Online School Program and Course and Program Provider	Fall 2011
The American Academy	Private Company	Online Course and Program Provider	Fall 2011
Virtual High School	Private Company	Online Course Provider	Spring 2011
Walla Walla High School	Walla Walla	Online School Program	Spring 2012

Continued on page 20

Table 2: Approved Providers (Continued)

Provider Name	District or Company	Provider Type	Approval Date
Washington Academy of Arts and Technology and EV Online Learning	East Valley, Spokane	Online School Program	Fall 2010
Washington Virtual Academy–Monroe	Monroe	Online School Program	Fall 2010
Washington Virtual Academy–Omak	Omak	Online School Program	Fall 2010

A complete list of approved providers is also available at:
<http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/approval/providers/>.

RESCINDMENT

In addition to the approval process, OSPI maintains an ongoing monitoring process of all approved providers. Like the approval process, the monitoring is based on the approval assurances and criteria. When OSPI has evidence that a provider is not meeting one or more of the approval conditions, the provider enters the approval rescindment process.

Upon notification of potential rescindment, the provider has the opportunity to submit a corrective action plan. OSPI can either accept the provider’s plan, or offer the provider an opportunity to further clarify and adjust the plan to correct the item in question. If the provider successfully carries out the agreed-upon plan, they will retain their approved status. If the provider is unable or unwilling to correct the issue, then OSPI can rescind the provider’s approval.

Two online school programs participated in the rescindment process during the 2011–12 school year.

The approved status of the Washington Virtual Academy (WAVA) in Steilacoom was rescinded when the district did not renew its contract with K12, Inc. and closed its program for the 2012–13 school year. WAVA’s other programs, in Monroe and Omak, remain approved.

Similarly, the approved status of the Bethel Online Academy was rescinded when the district reorganized the program and withdrew the program’s accreditation from the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC). Accreditation is a requirement for approval eligibility and maintenance.

ALTERNATE PATHS TO APPROVAL FOR ONLINE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

OSPI has updated the online learning rules (WAC [392-502](#)) and the approval process to incorporate the new requirements of ESHB 2065. In an effort to reduce the burden on both affected school districts and OSPI, while at the same time maintaining an appropriate level of monitoring and oversight, OSPI introduced two alternate approval pathways.

Affiliate Program Approval

The affiliate program approval option has been available since the second approval cycle which was conducted in fall 2010. This option allows for a streamlined approval process for online school programs which have entirely outsourced the content, platform, and instruction of their programs to already-approved online school program providers. Programs choosing this option do not need to submit evidence demonstrating that the program meets the approval criteria, but they must be accredited with the Northwest Accreditation Commission and they must agree to the approval assurances. The affiliate option requires the acceptance of an additional set of assurances, which stipulate that any departure of the program from affiliate status would require the program to participate in the full approval process.

Affiliate programs are considered to be “multidistrict”. They are eligible to serve students residing out of district at a rate of ten percent and more. Approvals granted under the affiliate option are good only for duration of the approved online school program provider’s approved status. If the online school program provider’s approval is lapsed or is rescinded, so is the approval of the affiliate program. More information about the affiliate approval option can be found on the DLD Website: <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/process/affiliate.php>.

Single District Program Approval

The single district program approval option was newly instituted in the 2012–13 school year and allows online school programs, which serve out-of-district students at a rate of less than ten percent, to seek approval without participating in the full review process. Like the affiliate approval option, the single district option does not entail the program’s submission of evidence demonstrating that it meets the approval criteria, but does require the program’s accreditation with the Northwest Accreditation Commission and the acceptance of the approval assurances. If, at the end of a school year, the annual average headcount of out-of-district students enrolled in the program increases to ten percent or more of the total program enrollment headcount, the program will be required to apply for approval as a multidistrict online provider in the next approval cycle. The program may continue operating the year of the required approval review, but not the following school year, unless approved as a multidistrict online provider. More information about the single district approval process can be found on the DLD Website: <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/process/single.php>.

Student and Course Totals

CEDARS

Districts report enrollment and course grade data to OSPI through CEDARS, and we are able to query CEDARS for information about students who have taken courses designated as “online.”

According to district data submitted to CEDARS, 19,891 students took at least one online course in 2011–12. This is 6.7 percent higher than the 2010–11 count of 18,649 students. In both cases, we are using a statewide total—a student is only counted once, even if the student was enrolled in multiple districts throughout the year.

Students took a total of 66,048 K–12 online courses in 2011–12, an 8.5 percent decrease from the 72,180 enrollments in the previous year. Note that students in Grades K–8 often have their

courses reported in a single entry such as “third grade” or “elementary curriculum” rather than multiple courses broken out by subject area. So, a full-time elementary enrollment would show up in the data as a single course.

A total of 215 schools in 123 districts reported online course enrollment, a 47.3 percent and 38.2 percent increase, respectively, over the 2010–11 figures of 146 schools in 89 districts. In previous years, we have suggested that increases in the reported online course activity were partially due to improved reporting and partially due to actual increases in activity. This is likely still the case with the 2011–12 figures, although the sharp increase in the number of schools and districts reporting activity, without a corresponding increase in student headcount or course enrollments, suggests that online learning options are available in many more districts than before, but that fewer students in each school are making use of the opportunities.

Table 3: CEDARS Online Activity by School Year

	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
Student Headcount	16,003	18,649	19,891
Course Enrollments	57,303	72,180	66,048
Schools	87	146	215
Districts	59	89	123

A complete list of schools with online students can be found in Appendix A.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Alternative Learning Experiences (ALE) programs are required to report enrollment information to OSPI on a monthly basis.

The yearly totals are reported as “annual averages.” Enrollment data was collected monthly from the ALE programs. The monthly collections were averaged together to create the annual totals. This means that more students may have enrolled in an online program at any given time, but the figures reported here represent the average over the entire year.

Districts reported the following for “digital/online” ALE programs in 2011–12:

- Annual average headcount: 10,275.0
- Annual average FTE: 8,433.0

Both the headcount and FTE were lower than 2010–11, by 8.7 percent and 6.1 percent respectively. One hundred and two ALE programs categorized themselves as digital/online, compared to 95 in 2010–11, a 7.4 percent increase.

Some of the decline in digital/online ALE enrollment can be attributed to a drop of 749.4 FTE in Quillayute Valley School District’s Insight School of Washington program.

DIGITAL LEARNING DEPARTMENT

School districts can purchase access to individual online courses through OSPI's Digital Learning Department (DLD) online course catalog. During 2011–12, 1,333 students enrolled in 2,665 courses. Enrollments came from 88 schools in 71 different school districts.

Use of the DLD catalog was significantly higher in 2011–12 as compared to 2010–11. The number of unique students accessing courses rose 50.1 percent and the number of enrollments was 39.8 percent higher. (Note that we also saw significant growth in the previous year with the number of participating students growing 56.3 percent from 2009–10 to 2010–11 and the number of enrollments rising 57.5 percent over the same period.) The number of schools making use of the DLD catalog fell slightly, from 89 schools in 2010–11 to 88 schools in 2011–12. This, coupled with the large increase in both students and enrollments, suggests that schools are deepening their use of this option for purchasing individual online courses.

Student Demographics

GENDER

Female students are slightly over-represented among students taking online courses, as compared to the population of non-online K–12 students in the state. Female students made up 52.2 percent of the online student population in 2011–12 (from CEDARS), compared to 48.2 percent of the non-online student population. The ratio of female online students in 2011–12 dropped from 53.0 percent of the online student population in 2010–11, while the non-online student rate held steady.

Figure 1: Gender in Online Students, Washington, 2011–12

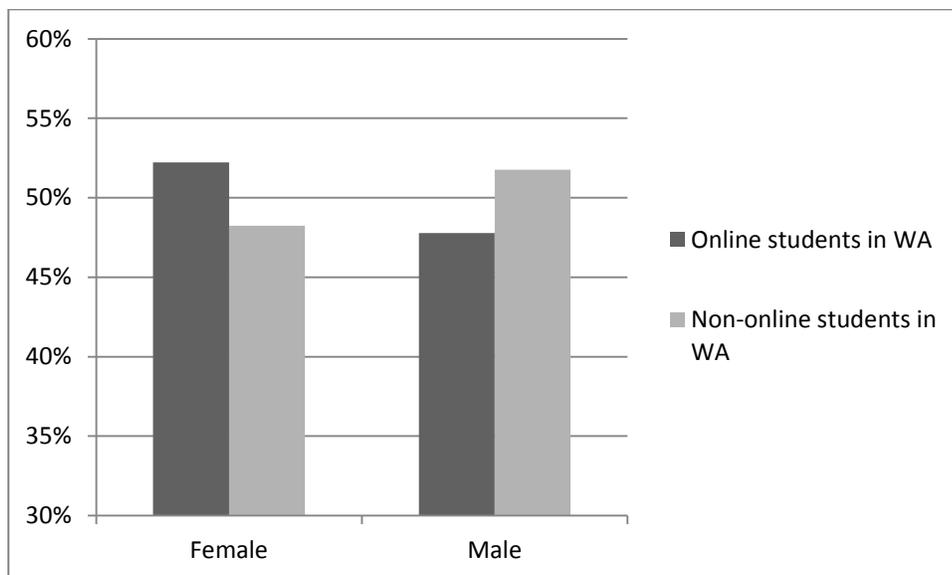


Table 4: Gender in Online Students, Washington, 2011–12

	Female	Male
Online Students (WA)	10,386 (52.2%)	9,505 (47.8%)
Non-online Students (WA)	538,733 (48.2%)	577,976 (51.8%)

ETHNICITY

As compared to the non-online student population, White students are significantly over-represented amongst online students.

Figure 2: Ethnicity in Online Students, Washington, 2011–12

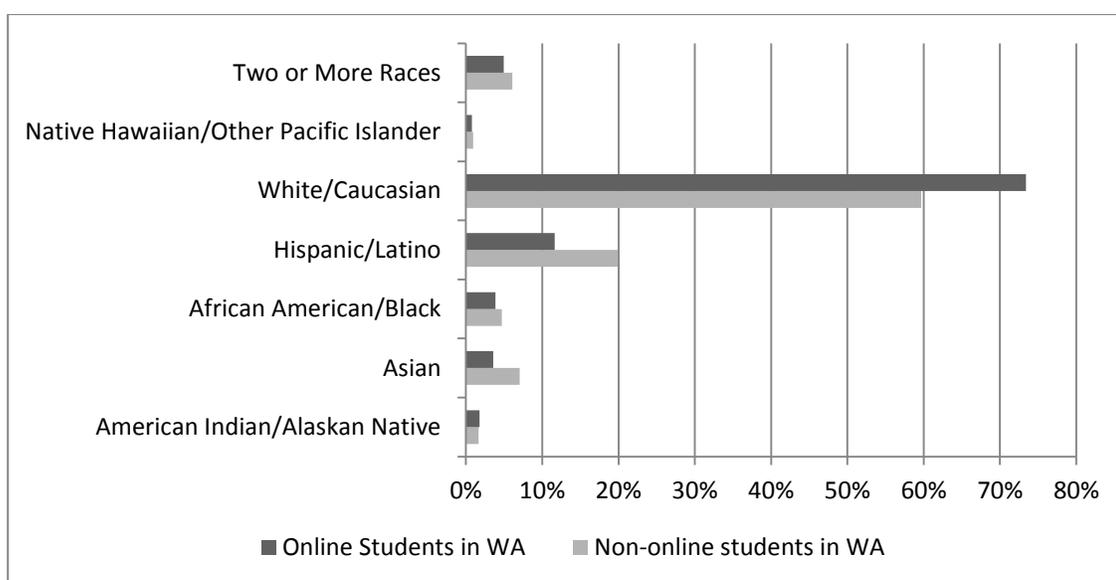


Table 5: Ethnicity in Online Students, Washington, 2011–12

Ethnicity	Online Students	Non-online students in WA
American Indian/Alaskan Native	356 (1.8%)	18,227 (1.6%)
Asian	713 (3.6%)	78,732 (7.1%)
African American/Black	770 (3.9%)	52,565 (4.7%)
Hispanic/Latino	2,312 (11.6%)	222,166 (19.9%)
White/Caucasian	14,600 (73.4%)	666,526 (59.7%)
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	151 (0.8%)	10,402 (0.9%)
Two or More Races	987 (5.0%)	68,057 (6.1%)
Not Provided	2 (0.0%)	34 (0.0%)
Total	19,891 (100.0%)	1,116,709 (100.0%)

TRANSITIONAL BILINGUAL

Of the 19,891 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 117 (0.59 percent) were marked as transitional bilingual students. Although this is significantly lower than the 8.09 percent (90,391) of non-online students in the state with the same designation, it does represent an increase over the 2010–11 rate of 0.26 percent (109) of transitional bilingual online students.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Of the 19,891 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 1,305 (6.6 percent) were students in special education. Among non-online students in the state, 14.0 percent (156,476) were in special education.

When looking at the special education rate for students in online courses in individual schools, the rate varies considerably. A number of schools have a special education rate that is near the state average. However, these tend to be schools that are offering individual online courses, not online school programs. The multidistrict online school programs (the shaded rows in **Error! eference source not found.**) have rates lower than the state average.

Table 6: Percentage of Online Students in Special Education in Schools With Over 100 Students Enrolled in Online Courses

(Shaded rows represent multidistrict online school programs.)

District	School	Total Online Students	Students Online in Special Education	Percent
Quillayute Valley School District	Insight School of Washington	2920	220	7.5
Steilacoom Hist. School District	Washington Virtual Academy	2058	160	7.8
Monroe School District	WAVA	1202	90	7.5
Evergreen School District (Clark)	iQ Academy Washington	1070	30	2.8
Omak School District	Washington Virtual Academy Omak Middle School	960	98	10.2
Omak School District	Washington Virtual Academy Omak Elementary	917	69	7.5
Federal Way School District	Internet Academy	514	1	0.2
Omak School District	Washington Virtual Academy Omak High School	417	34	8.2
Bethel School District	Bethel Online Academy	406	11	2.7
Vancouver School District	Vancouver Virtual Learning Academy	371	8	2.2

Continued on page 26

Table 6: Percentage of Online Students in Special Education in Schools With Over 100 Students Enrolled in Online Courses (Continued)

District	School	Total Online Students	Students Online in Special Education	Percent
White Salmon Valley School District	Columbia Tech High	368	0	0.0
Evergreen School District (Clark)	Heritage High School	282	31	11.0
Marysville School District	Marysville On-line Move Up Program	278	1	0.4
Kent School District	Kent Phoenix Academy	270	10	3.7
Yakima School District	Yakima Online	262	4	1.5
Snoqualmie Valley School District	Mount Si High School	231	4	1.7
North Thurston Public Schools	River Ridge High School	224	21	9.4
Edmonds School District	Edmonds Independent Learning	209	7	3.4
Peninsula School District	Gig Harbor High School	193	6	3.1
Sumner School District	Bonney Lake High School	188	10	5.3
Puyallup School District	Phoenix Program	180	2	1.1
Sumner School District	Sumner High School	169	12	7.1
Oak Harbor School District	Oak Harbor High School	161	4	2.5
Puyallup School District	Puyallup High School	161	31	19.3
Vancouver School District	Columbia River High School	150	7	4.7
Spokane School District	Lewis & Clark High School	144	5	3.5
Moses Lake School District	Moses Lake High School	132	4	3.0
Puyallup School District	Emerald Ridge High School	132	17	12.9
Quillayute Valley School District	Forks High School	129	16	12.4
East Valley School District (Spokane)	Washington Academy of Arts and Technology	127	8	6.3

Continued on page 27

Table 6: Percentage of Online Students in Special Education in Schools With Over 100 Students Enrolled in Online Courses (Continued)

District	School	Total Online Students	Students Online in Special Education	Percent
Puyallup School District	E. B. Walker High School	125	20	16.0
Evergreen School District (Clark)	Union High School	124	17	13.7
Issaquah School District	Skyline High School	123	4	3.3
Puyallup School District	Governor John Rogers High School	121	15	12.4
Peninsula School District	Henderson Bay High School	119	5	4.2
Toppenish School District	Eagle High School	116	3	2.6
Aberdeen School District	J M Weatherwax High School	109	6	5.5
North Kitsap School District	Kingston High School	107	3	2.8

There are a number of possible reasons for the disparity between the overall special education rate and the online school rate, including:

- Depending on a student’s individual needs, an online school program may not be the most appropriate educational option. Online programs require the ability to operate a computer, as well as the motivation to complete a significant amount of coursework in an independent manner. Students who are unable to operate within this learning environment are less likely to seek it out.
- Many of the students enrolling in online school programs are transferring from their resident district into an online school in another district. Students who are already receiving special education services in their resident district may be hesitant to transfer for fear that equivalent services will be unavailable or difficult to obtain.
- Online schools may be discouraging special education students from enrolling, either through pre-enrollment counseling or transfer rejections, out of concern for providing special education services to remote students. Rejection of a transfer request solely because of special education status is not consistent with the law.

PART-TIME HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS

Students can enroll part-time in a public school district and can be homeschooled for the other part of their education. A parent who wishes to home school his or her children must file a declaration of intent to provide home-based instruction. This is a distinct category apart from students who may have homeschooled in the past, but are now enrolled full-time in an online

program. The part-time homeschoolers discussed here are those who were, during the 2011–12 school year, involved in *both* an online course and their homeschool experience.

Of the 19,891 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 900 (4.5 percent) were enrolled part-time in a public school district and were also homeschooled. In comparison, only 0.5 percent of non-online students, or 5,208 total, were part-time homeschooled and part-time enrolled in the public school system. Over 17 percent of all part-time homeschooled students were enrolled in online courses. Notably, the online students who were part-time homeschooled dropped from 1,070 students (5.7 percent) in 2010–11.

Of the homeschooled students taking an online course, 89.0 percent were enrolled in the Washington Virtual Academy program (run by the Steilacoom Historical, Monroe, and Omak School Districts). All but 90 of those students were enrolled in Grades K–8. Overall, 14.7 percent of WAVA students were part-time homeschooled. The only other programs in the state with similar percentages were ones that enrolled far fewer total students and part-time homeschooled students.

See Appendix A for the full list of programs with part-time homeschooled students.

Course Enrollment Patterns

PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME COURSE ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

The majority of online students do not take all of their coursework online. Sixty-seven percent of high school students taking online courses took fewer than five courses during the 2011–12 school year. (The rate of students taking fewer than five courses rose from 55 percent in 2010–11.) Only 13.8 percent of students took enough courses (ten or more) to be considered full-time for the entire school year.

A “**course**” in this context refers to a single semester-long enrollment, so a year-long course (Algebra 1, for example) would be reported as two courses. We have scoped the analysis of part-time and full-time enrollment to high school students only. Each high school course is reported in CEDARS as a distinct course. Full-time high school students will take five or six courses per semester, or 10 or 12 courses for the year. Students in Grades K–8, however, are more likely to have their courses reported in a single entry (e.g., “elementary curriculum”). So, a full-time elementary enrollment would show up in the data as a single course. By examining only high school courses, we are better able to distinguish course-taking patterns.

Figure 3: Number of Online Courses Taken, 2011–12

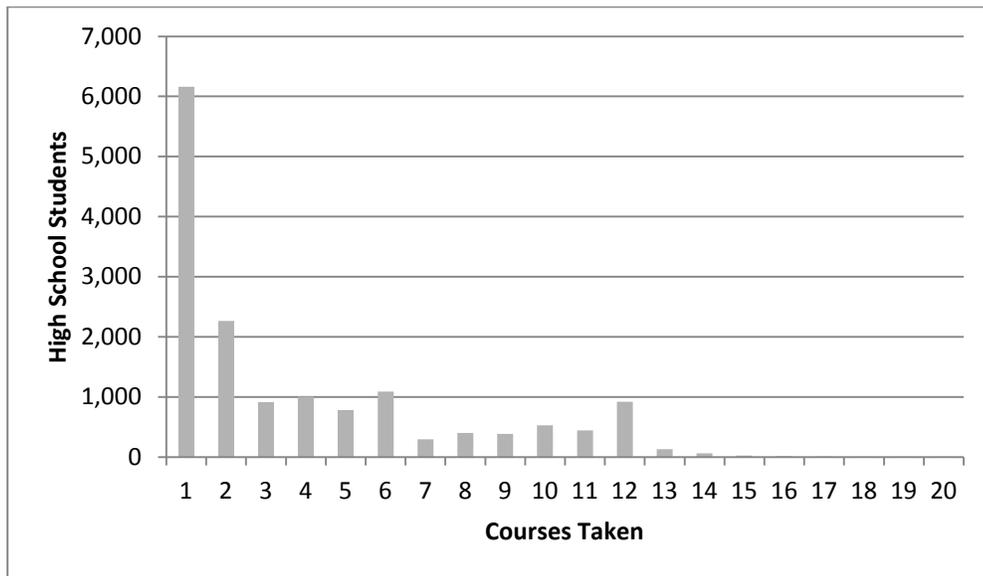


Table 7: Number of Online Courses Taken, 2011–12

Courses	High School Students	Percent
1	6,162	40.0%
2	2,263	14.7%
3	915	5.9%
4	1,002	6.5%
5	780	5.1%
6	1,089	7.1%
7	295	1.9%
8	400	2.6%
9	383	2.5%
10	529	3.4%
11	444	2.9%
12	917	5.9%
13	129	0.8%
14	62	0.4%
15	24	0.2%
16	13	0.1%
17	8	0.1%
18	1	0.0%
19	2	0.0%
20	3	0.0%
Total	15,421	100.0%

While these figures include online courses offered by both online school programs and schools offering access to individual online courses, an analysis of the ten largest programs in the state, by student enrollment, shows that many online school programs serve predominately part-time students.

Table 8: Part-Time and Full-Time Online Students

School	Online Students	Students in Fewer Than Five Courses	Students in Five or More Courses
Insight School of Washington	2920	31.0%	69.0%
WAVA	1187	14.0%	86.0%
iQ Academy Washington	671	55.1%	44.9%
Washington Virtual Academy Omak High School	403	18.9%	81.1%
Internet Academy	374	60.2%	39.8%
Columbia Tech High	368	100.0%	0.0%
Bethel Online Academy	358	61.5%	38.5%
Vancouver Virtual Learning Academy	290	74.8%	25.2%
Heritage High School	282	91.5%	8.5%
Marysville On-line Move Up Program	278	57.9%	42.1%

Examining the digital/online ALE enrollment throughout the school year, the enrollment high-point comes in the spring. The September enrollment figures are often low, as students are still exploring their options and enrolling in online programs.

Figure 4: ALE Digital/Online FTE, 2011–12

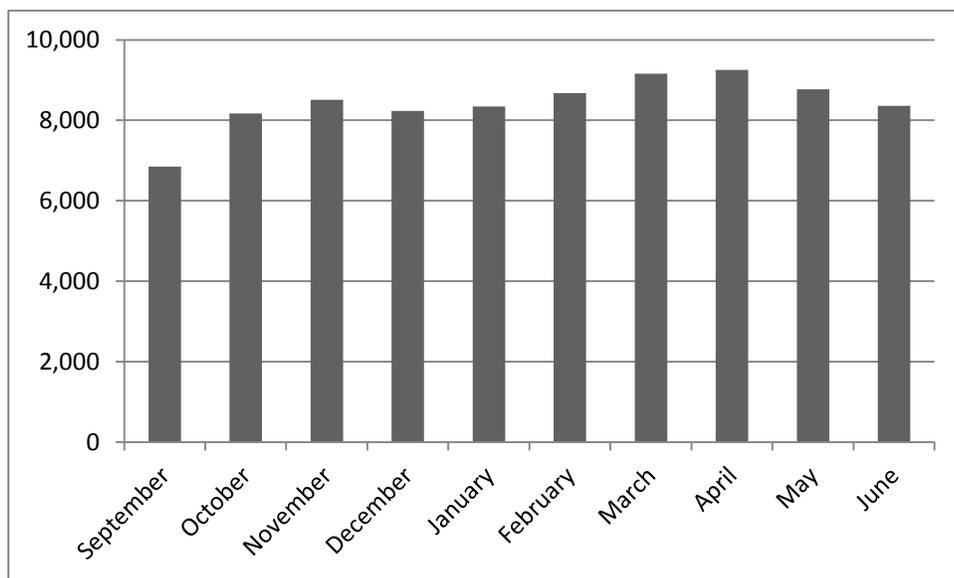


Table 9: ALE Digital/Online FTE and Headcount, 2011–12

Month	FTE	Headcount
September	6,845.8	7,969
October	8,167.4	9,946
November	8,506.9	10,346
December	8,233.6	9,971
January	8,342.7	10,061
February	8,672.4	10,363
March	9,160.5	11,252
April	9,250.5	11,362
May	8,771.0	10,980
June	8,355.4	10,346

Compared to the previous school year, it appears that digital/online ALE programs were able to better retain FTEs throughout the 2011–12 school year. In last year’s report, we had some concerns about retention, and therefore, student turnover. Those same concerns are less evident in 2011–12.

Figure 5: ALE Digital/Online Monthly FTE Enrollment

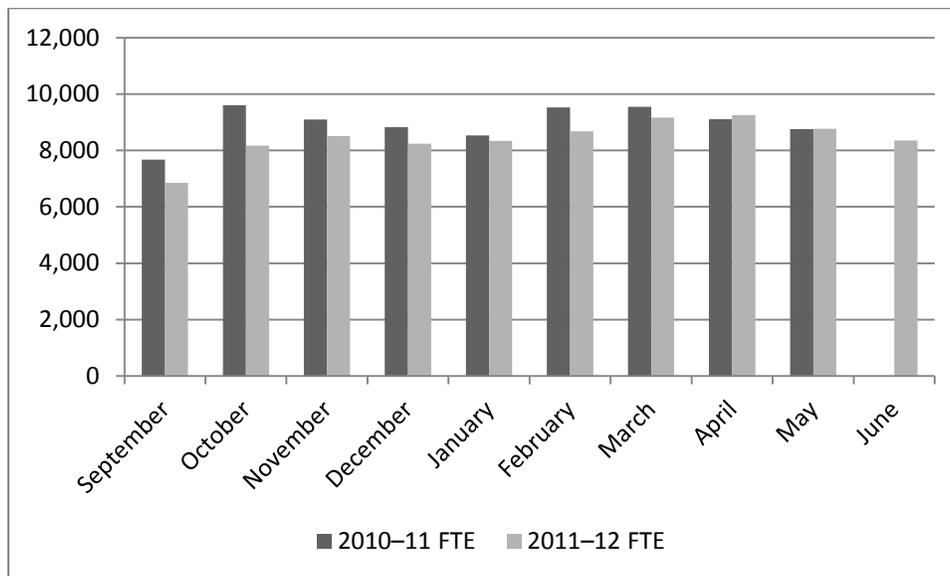


Table 10: ALE Digital/Online Monthly FTE Enrollment and Headcount

Month	2010–11 FTE	2010–11 HC	2011–12 FTE	2011–12 HC
September	7,673.0	8936	6,845.8	7,969
October	9,602.4	11229	8,167.4	9,946
November	9,091.0	11309	8,506.9	10,346
December	8,820.2	11189	8,233.6	9,971
January	8,527.8	10834	8,342.7	10,061
February	9,527.1	11828	8,672.4	10,363
March	9,546.5	12256	9,160.5	11,252
April	9,107.3	11995	9,250.5	11,362
May	8,761.4	11547	8,771.0	10,980
June			8,355.4	10,346

Note: There were only nine monthly counts in 2010–11. The June count was added for the 2011–12 school year.

SUBJECTS

Our knowledge of the specific subjects taken online comes from two data sources: CEDARS and the DLD online catalog.

Table 11: Online Course Enrollment by Subject Area

Content Area	Enrollments	Percent
English Language Arts	11,275	17.1%
Math	9,968	15.1%
Physical, Health, and Safety Education	7,268	11.0%
History	7,097	10.7%
Science	7,039	10.7%
No content area provided	5,775	8.7%
Miscellaneous	5,446	8.2%
Foreign Languages	2,212	3.3%
Visual Arts	1,992	3.0%
Computer and Information Sciences	1,769	2.7%
Civics and Government	1,630	2.5%
Business and Marketing	1,401	2.1%
Geography	1,105	1.7%
Music	634	1.0%
Communications and Audio/Visual Technology	456	0.7%
Economics	294	0.4%
Engineering and Technology	252	0.4%

Continued on page 33

Table 11: Online Course Enrollment by Subject Area (Continued)

Content Area	Enrollments	Percent
Non-Instructional time	176	0.3%
Health Care Sciences	138	0.2%
Human Services	62	0.1%
Reading	33	0.0%
Public, Protective, and Government Service	18	0.0%
Elementary Curriculum	3	0.0%
Theatre	3	0.0%
Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources	2	0.0%
Total	66,048	100.0%

Note: Most of the course enrollments in the “Miscellaneous” category appear to have been mis-categorized by the reporting districts, as most of the course titles in that area suggest other categorization.

Most of the elementary and middle school courses are in the “No Content Area Provided” category. The inclusion of three courses categorized as “Elementary Curriculum” is not indicative of the total number of elementary-level courses taken.

The CEDARS data contrasts somewhat with the DLD catalog course enrollment data, where foreign language courses were the top draw. The differences are likely due to the differing contexts. CEDARS enrollments include both courses taken in the individual course context and those that are a part of a full-time online curriculum. In contrast, many of the DLD courses were taken in the individual context. Students in DLD courses are less likely to be full-time online students.

Table 12: Online Enrollment in DLD Courses by Subject Area

Subject	Enrollments	Percent
Arts	90	3.4%
Business	36	1.4%
Interdisciplinary	14	0.5%
Language Arts	392	14.7%
Life Skills-Health	205	7.7%
Mathematics	734	27.5%
Science	246	9.2%
Social Studies	384	14.4%
Technology	209	7.8%
World Languages	424	15.9%
Total Course Enrollments*	2665	102.6%

* In the DLD catalog, a single course may have more than one subject. The total registrations line in the table above indicates the total number of registrations, not a total of the number of registrations for each subject.

COURSE LEVEL

Courses in the DLD catalog are assigned a level to aid students and educators in the enrollment process. Nearly all of the course enrollments were in “standard” level courses. Note, however, that the assigned level does not necessarily imply intent, as it is possible for standard-level courses to be taken in a credit recovery context.

Table 13: Online Enrollment in DLD Courses by Level

Level	Registrations	Percent
Advanced Placement	75	2.8%
Credit Recovery	223	8.4%
Honors	25	0.9%
Remedial	24	0.9%
Standard	2317	87.0%
Total	2664	100.0%

GRADE LEVEL

High school students make up 76.6 percent of the online student population—a rate virtually unchanged from the 2010–11 total of 76.5 percent.

Online learning at the elementary level, especially with the earlier grades, looks fundamentally different than online learning for middle and high school students. Programs aimed at elementary students are often structured to include significant parental involvement. Many of these programs also provide a good deal of non-online curriculum. In practice, these programs often look similar to ALE parent partnership programs, despite being labeled as online.

Figure 6: Online Students by Grade Level (CEDARS), 2011–12

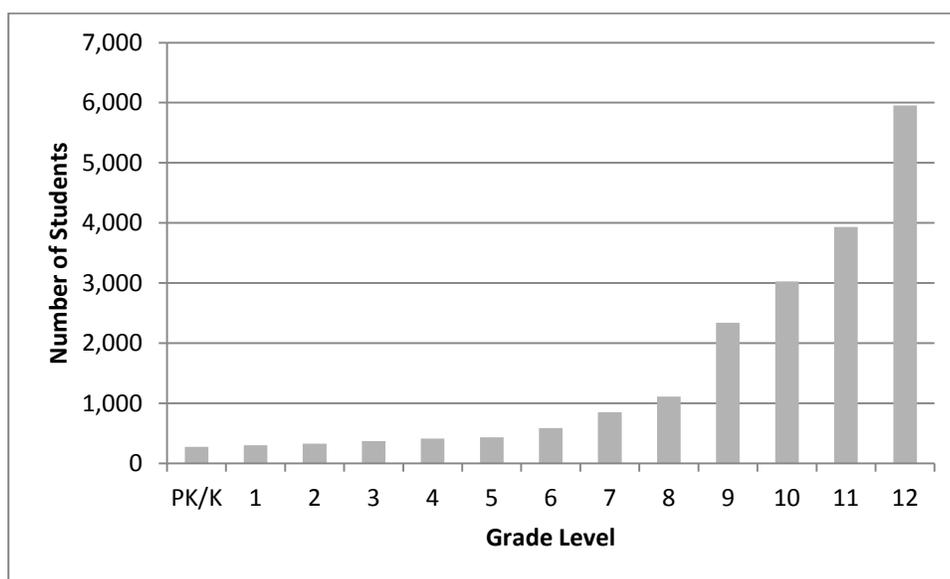


Table 14: Online Students by Grade Level (CEDARS), 2011–12

Grade Level	Students	Student %	Enrollments	Avg. Enrollments per Student
PK/K	273	1.4%	279	1.02
1	299	1.5%	301	1.01
2	328	1.6%	329	1.00
3	370	1.9%	378	1.02
4	412	2.1%	412	1.00
5	432	2.2%	441	1.02
6	584	2.9%	604	1.03
7	848	4.3%	879	1.04
8	1,111	5.6%	1,229	1.11
9	2,336	11.7%	10,542	4.51
10	3,027	15.2%	13,862	4.58
11	3,933	19.8%	15,197	3.86
12	5,955	29.9%	21,595	3.63
Total	19,908	100.0%	66,048	3.32

Note: The student total is somewhat different from the overall state totals used elsewhere in the report because we looked for distinct student identification numbers by grade level. As with the overall online population, students enrolled in individual classes via the DLD online course catalog are predominately high school students.

Figure 7: Number of Students in DLD Online Courses by Grade, 2011–12

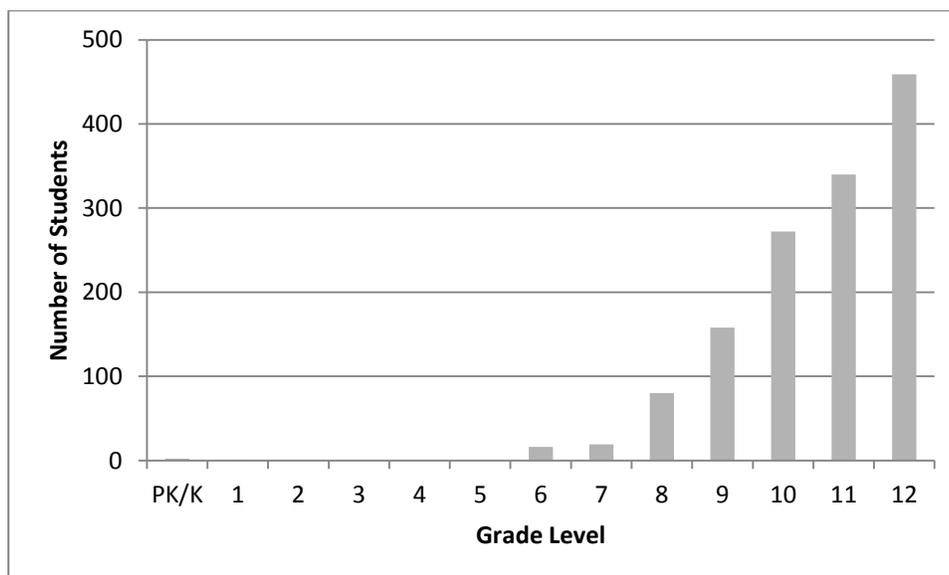


Table 15: Number of Students in DLD Online Courses by Grade, 2011–12

Grade Level	Students	Percent
PK/K	2	0.1%
1	1	0.1%
2	0	0.0%
3	0	0.0%
4	0	0.0%
5	0	0.0%
6	16	1.2%
7	19	1.4%
8	80	5.9%
9	158	11.7%
10	272	20.2%
11	340	25.2%
12	459	34.1%
Total	1347	100.0%

STUDENT MOTIVATION

Students seek online courses for a variety of reasons, and those reasons likely vary depending on the type of course. The DLD gathers data about students enrolling in individual online courses. As a part of the registration process, course registrars are asked to report the reason for the student’s enrollment.

Table 16: Student Motivation for Taking DLD Courses

Reason	Enrollments	Percent
Course not available at the school	915	34.4%
Course helps student earn credit needed to graduate	685	25.7%
Online learning environment perceived as better-meeting student's learning style	367	13.8%
Course helps student make up failed credits needed to graduate	287	10.8%
Online course venue helps alleviate scheduling conflict	177	6.7%
Course allows student to better prepare for college-level coursework	91	3.4%
Other	82	3.1%
Course offers student enrichment or subject matter of interest	50	1.9%
Course helps student earn college credit	6	0.2%
Course is needed to earn the second half of a full online credit	1	0.0%
Total	2,661	100.0%

These results only apply for students taking individual online courses, and not those enrolling in an online school program, as motivations likely vary dramatically for students enrolling in a full-time online school program. Currently, there is no data that speaks to student motivation for enrollment in online school programs.

PAYMENT

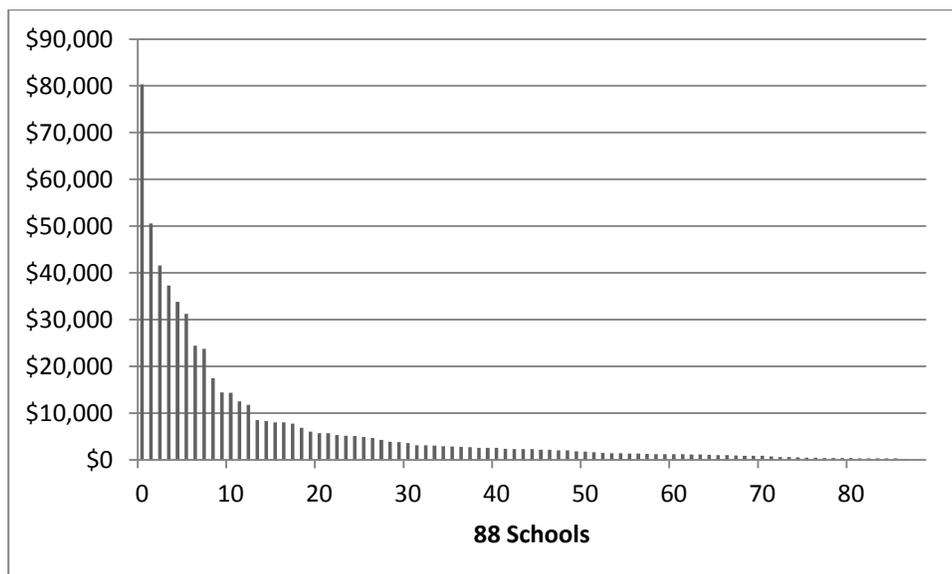
School-based registrars are asked to identify the funding source for course payments when registering students for individual DLD online courses. Most courses, according to the registrars, were paid for by the school, not the student. But, the 2011–12 rate of school payment, 76.2 percent, is down from 86.4 percent in 2010–11. Note that if the course is taken as a part of the student’s basic education, then the school *must* pay for the course. If the course is taken outside of basic education—for example, as an after-school course—local district policy determines responsibility for payment.

Table 17: Payment Source for DLD Online Courses

Reason	Enrollments	Percent
School will pay full amount	1992	76.2%
Student/family will pay full amount	559	21.4%
Student/family will pay partial amount; school will pay partial amount	61	2.3%
Other	2	0.1%
Total	2,614	100.0%

Schools spent, in total, \$577,320 on DLD online courses, an increase of \$192,739 over the previous year. Thirteen schools spent more than \$10,000 during the school year on DLD courses, and twelve spent between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

Figure 8: Spending on DLD Courses per School, 2011–12



Schools paid an average of \$271 for each completed DLD course. The highest single semester course cost was \$425, for an Advanced Placement course that included a textbook. The lowest cost was \$150 for a summer-term course. Note that many credit recovery courses have a lower cost structure, averaging \$176 per semester, to reflect the fact that students can often quickly move through material they have previously mastered.

Dropped DLD courses are charged based on when the drop occurred. If the student drops prior to the course start, there is no charge to the school. If the student drops within two weeks of the start date, the school pays a fraction of the overall fee, and the school pays the full fee if the drop occurs outside of the two-week window. On average, schools paid \$60 for dropped courses.

Non-Resident Students

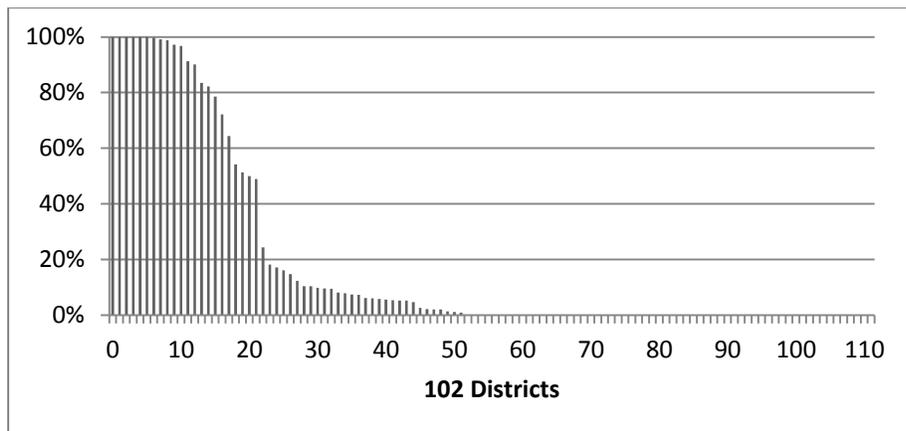
Based on the non-resident district data submitted by online ALE programs, an average annual headcount of 6,903.3 students were enrolled in a “digital/online” ALE program in a district other than their resident district. In order to do this, some students completely transferred to a non-resident district. In other cases, a student’s resident district contracted with a non-resident district to allow the student to split their coursework between two districts. Based on the total annual average headcount, non-resident students represented 67.2 percent of students enrolled in online ALE programs, a percentage virtually unchanged from the prior year. The annual average non-resident FTE was 6,216.0, representing 73.7 percent of all online ALE FTE.

The 2011–12 figures represented an 8.9 percent decrease in headcount and a 6.7 percent decrease in FTE over the 2010–11 figures.

One hundred and two digital/online programs reported ALE enrollment to OSPI. Of those, 47 programs (46.1 percent) enrolled non-resident students. Thirty programs had more than ten percent of their students enroll from out-of-district. See Appendix B for the complete list.

The bulk of the non-resident students (6,031.5, 87.4 percent) were enrolled in the thirteen programs that had over 90 percent non-resident students. In other words, a few large programs—including Insight School of Washington and the WAVA programs—accounted for the vast majority of non-resident students.

Figure 9: Non-Resident Headcount, ALE, 2011–12



Ten school districts gained more than 100 non-resident FTE.

Table 18: Non-Resident Headcount, ALE, 2010–11

Non-Resident District	Average FTE Gained	Average Headcount Gained
Quillayute Valley	1600.025	1601.9
Steilacoom Hist.	1381.642	1542.6
Omak	1287.471	1409
Monroe	729.113	821.8
Evergreen (Clark)	249.296	294.9
Federal Way	155.693	194.1
White Salmon	35.701	181.1
Toppenish	162.87	163.8
Stevenson-Carson	143.162	156.4
Marysville	109.06	109.1

See Appendix B for a complete list.

Of the 295 districts in the state, 255 had resident students enroll in non-resident districts to take digital/online ALE courses. Sixteen school districts had more than 100 FTE leave the district. However, most districts saw smaller losses. Of the 255 districts, 182 (71.4 percent) had fewer than 25 FTE transfer to another district.

Tacoma School District has topped this list for all of the three years in which OSPI has collected data. Notably, the non-resident FTE leaving the district in 2011–12 was 102.3 FTE *lower* than the 2010–11 total of 313.1 FTE. Tacoma’s relatively new online program, Tacoma Virtual Learning, has likely satisfied some of the demand for access to online learning from Tacoma’s resident students, resulting in more students staying within their districts.

Table 19: Resident Districts of ALE Students Enrolled in Non-Resident Districts

Resident District	Annual Average FTE Enrolled in Non-Resident Districts	Annual Average Headcount Enrolled in Non-Resident Districts
Tacoma	210.8	234.2
Seattle	206.9	231.6
Kent	159.3	176.1
Evergreen (Clark)	149.8	156.7
Clover Park	144.4	158.0
North Thurston	139.1	159.1
Lake Washington	130.5	158.2
Everett	123.8	134.7
Vancouver	121.4	132.6
Federal Way	118.5	129.4
Bellevue	118.3	142.1
Renton	111.9	119.9
Spokane	109.1	113.5
Highline	107.1	115.3
Battle Ground	104.4	113.1
Puyallup	103.5	112.9
Edmonds	96.5	107.8
Auburn	91.9	113.1

See Appendix C for the complete list.

Student transfers can negatively affect finances in the resident districts because state funding for the students leaving the district flows to the non-resident district. Note, however, that not all of these students were necessarily *enrolled* in the resident district prior to leaving, as some students were engaged in home-based instruction, and then transferred directly to a non-resident district without first enrolling in their local resident district. Students in this situation wouldn't necessarily impact a school district's bottom line, as the resident district had not been collecting state funding for the student prior to the transfer.

Online Learning in the ALE Context

As discussed earlier, the ALE data set is an important one for understanding online course enrollment patterns. But, ALE is a much broader category, and it can therefore be useful to understand how online learning fits into ALE.

ALE exists to provide students a public education option that takes place, in whole or in part, independently from a regular classroom setting or schedule. The ALE rules determine how school districts can claim state funding for students who are not following the "seat time" model.

Note that, while most online learning is claimed under ALE, districts can also offer online courses and use the seat time rules by assigning the student to work on the course in a classroom on a regular schedule.

There are three types of ALE programs:

- **Online programs**, as defined earlier in this report.
- **Parent partnerships** are characterized by significant participation from parents.
- **Contract-based programs** do not refer to programs that have been contracted out to a company. Instead, the “contract” refers to an agreement between the program and the students. Contract-based programs tend to serve largely at-risk high school students.

When reporting to OSPI, programs self-categorize. In practice, there is often blurring of the boundaries between the program types; for example, many parent partnerships and contract-based programs offer online courses.

Online enrollments have grown significantly since 2005–06.

Figure 10: ALE Total FTEs

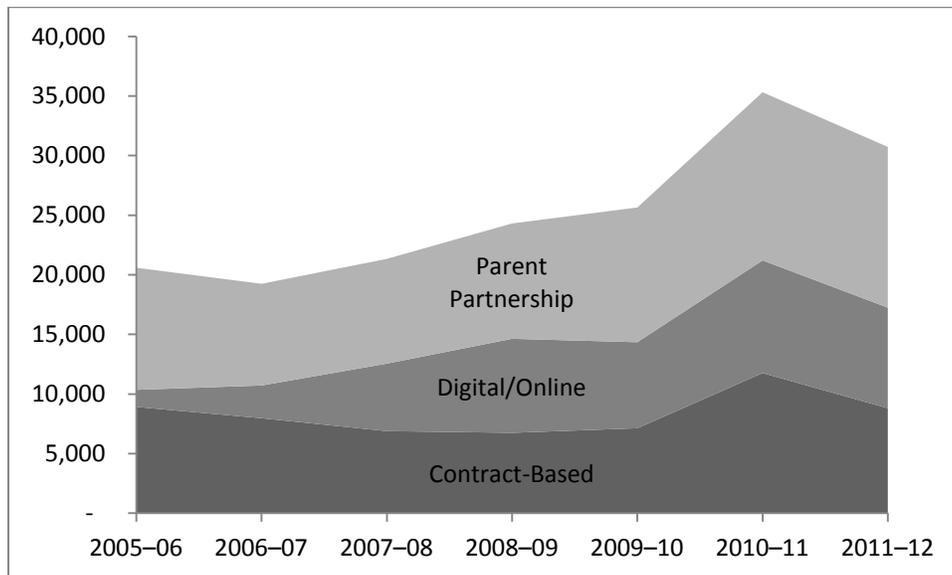


Table 20: ALE Total FTEs

	ALE programs	Contract-based	Parent Partnership	Digital/Online	Total FTE
2005–06	207	8,914	10,237	1,437	20,588
2006–07	226	7,969	8,526	2,747	19,242
2007–08	227	6,885	8,783	5,666	21,334
2008–09	270	6,744	9,674	7,887	24,305
2009–10	262	7,125	11,299	7,219	25,643
2010–11	360	11,755	14,105	9,451	35,310
2011–12	356	8,809	13,483	8,433	30,726

Notes:

- Program type categorizations are determined by districts when they report.
- In 2010–11, districts could choose from two “hybrid” program types: online contract-based and online parent/partner. Those choices were removed for 2011–12. For comparison purposes, we’ve re-classified, when possible, enrollment in those programs into the program type listed for 2011–12.
- Valley School District classified the Columbia Virtual Academy (CVA) program as parent partnership in 2010–11 and digital/online in 2011–12. For comparison purposes, we’ve re-classified the 2011–12 data as parent partnership as it both better fits CVA’s program design and allows for more accurate year-to-year comparisons.

Parent partnerships represent the bulk of K–8 enrollments, along with a smaller proportion of digital/online programs. Contract-based and digital/online programs are more prevalent in high school.

Figure 11: 2011–12 ALE FTEs by Grade

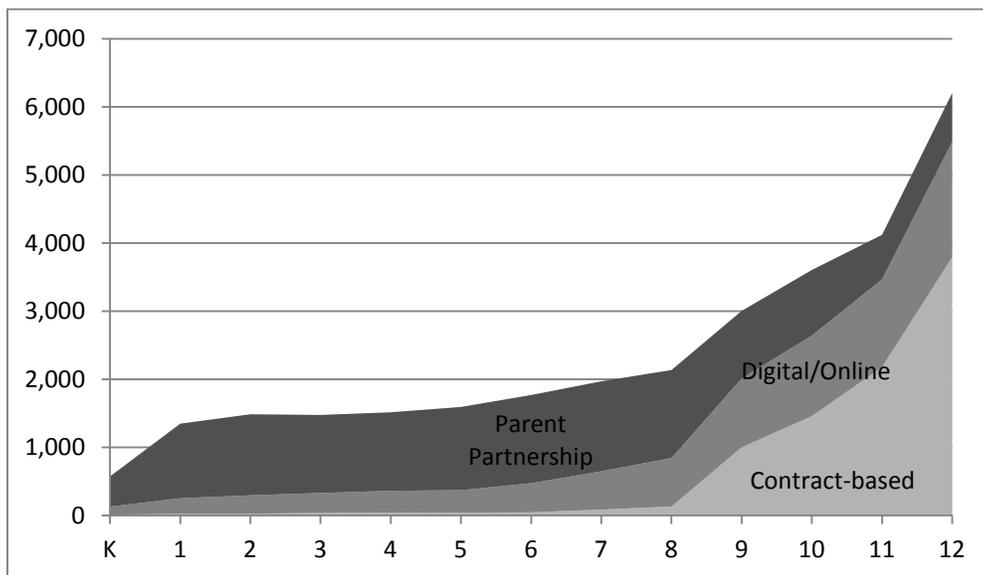


Table 21: 2011–12 ALE FTEs by Grade

2011–12 FTEs	Contract-based	Digital/Online	Parent Partnership	Total
K	12.5	118.1	443.9	574
1	23.2	229.9	1,094.30	1,347
2	26.1	268.5	1,189.60	1,484
3	33.8	294.3	1,145.10	1,473
4	38.5	320.5	1,152.70	1,512
5	38.3	329.2	1,220.80	1,588
6	41.2	427.3	1,294.20	1,763
7	80.2	561.8	1,321.10	1,963
8	124.3	711.7	1,292.00	2,128
9	992.8	1,009.80	992.9	2,995
10	1,449.30	1,181.40	964.3	3,595
11	2,167.80	1,287.50	654	4,109
12	3,781.40	1,693.00	718.1	6,192
Total	8,809	8,433	13,483	30,725

The monthly ALE report gives us some insight into the physical location of students enrolled in ALE programs. Seventy-four percent of students (by FTE) in digital/online ALE programs had transferred from another school district. This sharply contrasts with contract-based programs at only 17 percent non-resident FTEs, and parent partnerships at 54 percent non-resident FTEs.

Figure 12: 2011–12 ALE FTEs by Location

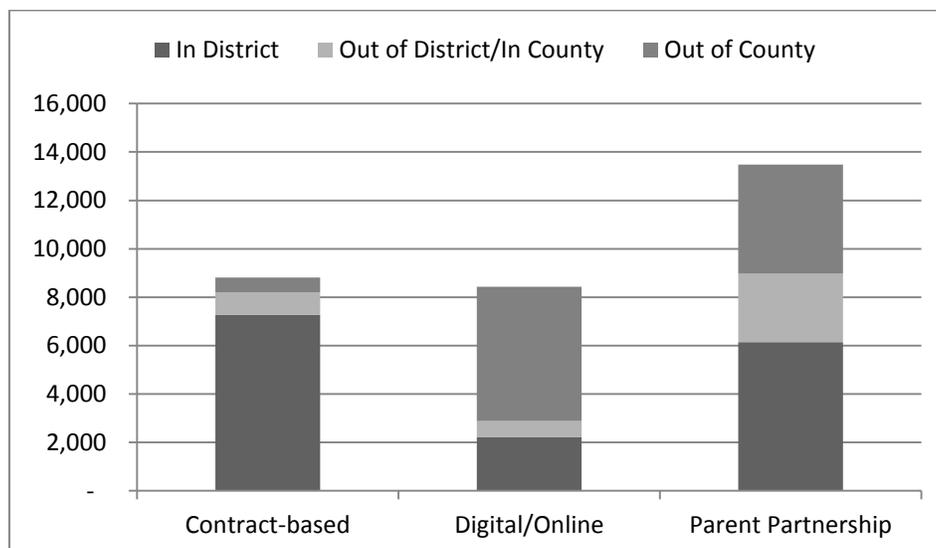


Table 22: 2011–12 ALE FTEs by Location

Program Type	In District	Out of District/ In County	Out of County	Total
Contract-based	7,278	935	596	8,809
Digital/Online	2,217	667	5,549	8,433
Parent Partnership	6,142	2,826	4,516	13,483
Total	15,636	4,428	10,661	30,725

ESHB 2065 cut funding for ALE programs by an average of 15 percent. OSPI implemented the cut by funding some programs at 80 percent of their normal rate, and others at 90 percent, depending on how much contact time with students the program was able to provide. (See WAC 392-121-182, section 8.) About two-thirds, 63.1 percent, of ALE FTEs were funded at the 90 percent level.

Most contract-based programs were able to claim at 90 percent, largely because they had existing instructional models that required the necessary in-person instructional time, and, as was pointed out earlier, they served a high percentage of resident students. Online programs, by comparison, often struggled to meet the contact time requirements, and therefore more online FTEs were claimed at the lower amount.

Figure 13: Differential Funding by Program Type

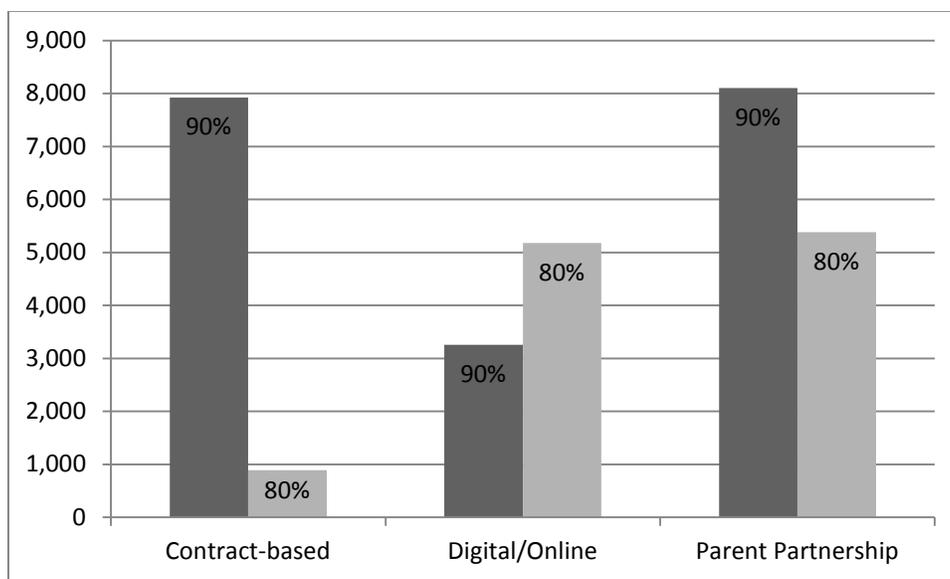


Table 23: Differential Funding by Program Type and FTE

Program Type	90%	80%	Total FTE
Contract-based	7,919.9	889.4	8,809.3
Digital/Online	3,257.0	5,176.0	8,433.0
Parent Partnership	8,103.6	5,379.7	13,483.2

Assessment

Scores on the state assessments, the Measurements of Student Progress (MSP), High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), and end-of-course (EOC) exams, can help gauge the effectiveness of online school programs.

For this analysis, we are looking at assessment results from the known online schools listed in the table below.

Table 24: Assessments Taken by School

School	Grade							EOC
	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	
Bethel Online Academy					MSP	MSP	HSPE	Yes
Insight School of Washington							HSPE	Yes
Internet Academy	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	HSPE	Yes
iQ Academy Washington				MSP	MSP	MSP	HSPE	Yes
Marysville On-line Move Up Program							HSPE	Yes
NW Allprep	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	HSPE	Yes
Vancouver Virtual Learning Academy				MSP	MSP	MSP	HSPE	Yes
Washington Virtual Academy (Monroe)							HSPE	Yes
Washington Virtual Academy (Omak)	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	HSPE	Yes
Washington Virtual Academy (Steilacoom)	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP		Yes
Yakima Online				MSP	MSP	MSP	HSPE	Yes

If a program tested fewer than ten students in a particular subject and grade level, those results were not reported or included in this analysis. **Note:** For Grades 3–6, we only have data from a limited number of programs, and the small sample sizes in these grade ranges make it problematic to draw conclusions about the performance of online schools as a whole.

STUDENTS TESTED

Figure 14: Reading, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12

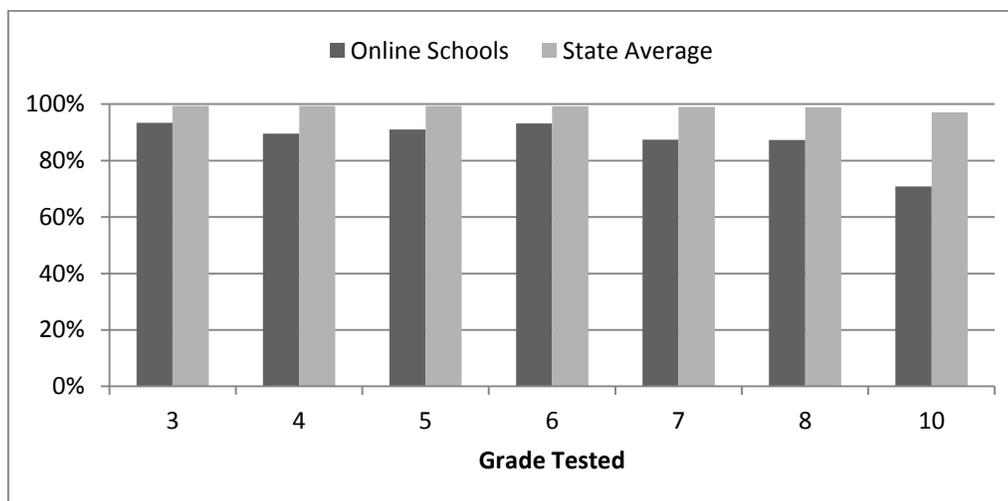
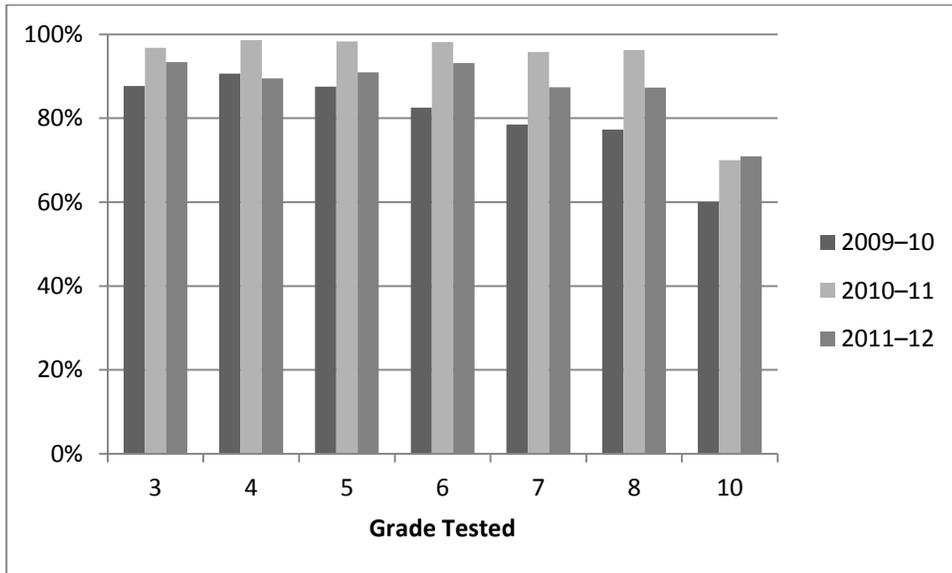


Table 25: Reading, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12

Grade	Online Students Tested		Total Students Tested in State	
3	183	93.4%	75,506	99.3%
4	196	89.5%	74,499	99.3%
5	201	91.0%	76,540	99.3%
6	297	93.1%	76,499	99.2%
7	373	87.4%	75,983	99.0%
8	508	87.3%	75,845	98.9%
10	633	70.9%	72,436	97.1%
All Grades	2,391	83.7%	527,308	98.9%

Figure 15: Reading, Percent of Online Students Tested by Year



After seeing significant improvements in the rate of students tested from 2009–10 to 2010–11, the rates fell for students taking the reading MSP/HSPE in all grades except 10th grade.

Figure 16: Math, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12

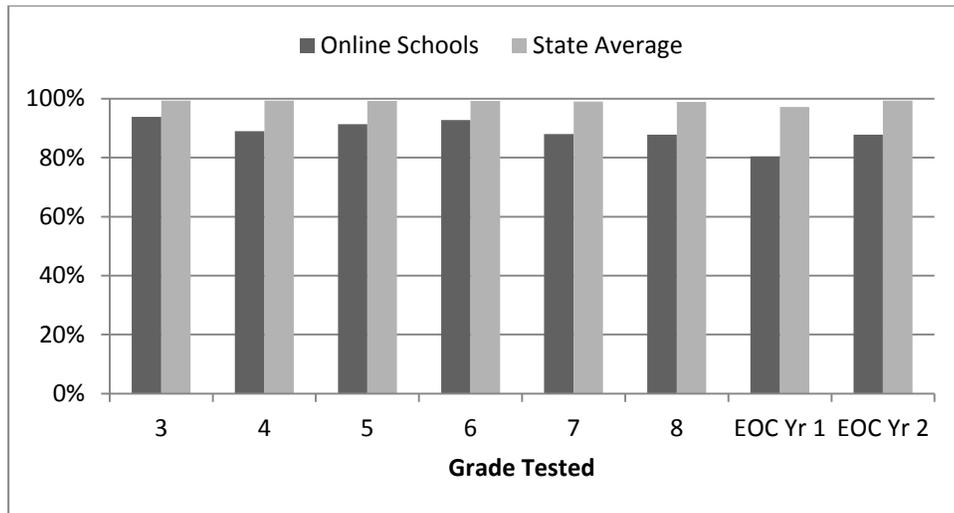


Table 26: Math, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12

Grade	Online Students Tested		Total Students Tested in State	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
3	183	93.8%	75,563	99.4%
4	195	89.0%	74,502	99.4%
5	202	91.4%	76,567	99.3%
6	296	92.8%	76,541	99.3%
7	377	88.1%	76,010	99.0%
8	497	87.8%	75,808	98.9%
All Grades (MSP)	1,750	89.8%	454,991	99.2%
EOC Year 1	782	80.5%	99,337	97.2%
EOC Year 2	332	87.8%	56,224	99.4%
All EOC	1,114	82.6%	155,561	98.0%

Figures for end-of-course exams include all grade levels tested for Year 1 (Algebra 1 and Integrated Math 1) and Year 2 (Geometry and Integrated Math 2).

Figure 17: Writing, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12

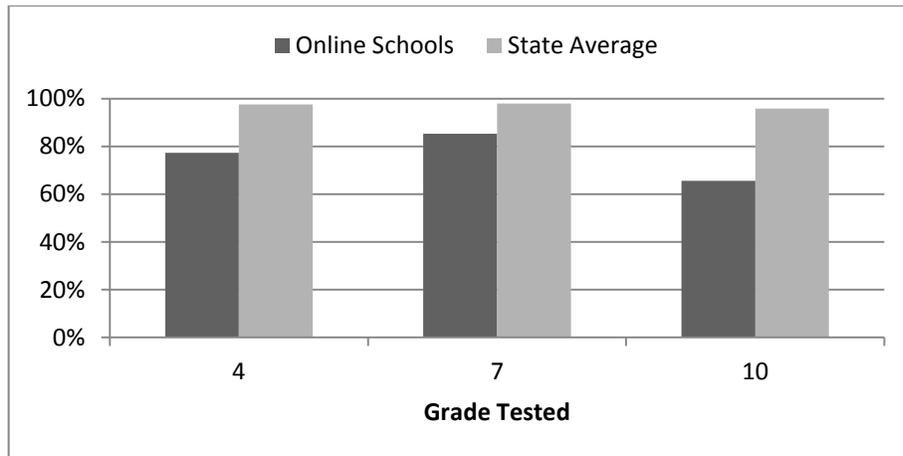


Table 27: Writing, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12

Grade	Online Students Tested		Total Students Tested in State	
4	168	77.4%	73,009	97.6%
7	356	85.4%	74,813	98.0%
10	600	65.6%	71,148	95.9%
All Grades	1,124	72.6%	218,970	97.2%

Figure 18: Science, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12

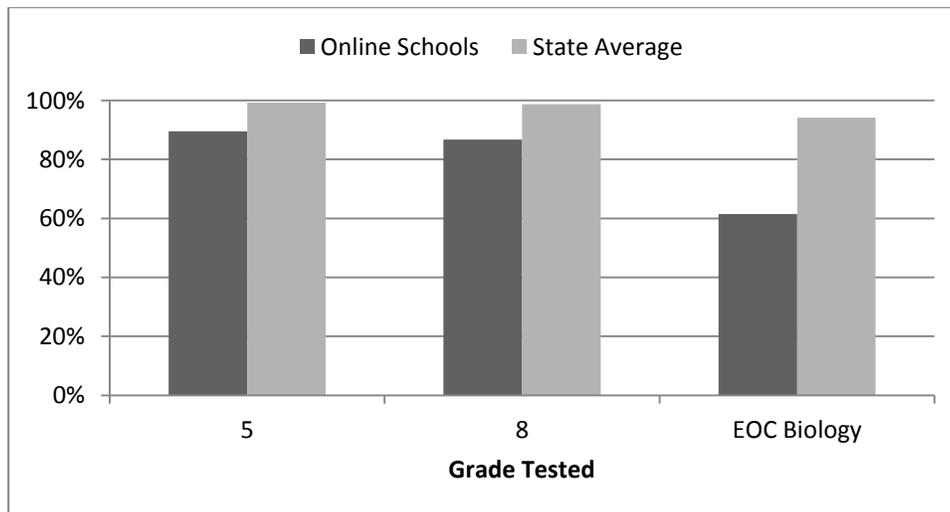


Table 28: Science, Percent of Students Tested, 2011–12

Grade	Online Students Tested		Total Students Tested in State	
5	198	89.6%	76,430	99.2%
8	505	86.8%	75,625	98.7%
All Grades (MSP)	703	87.5%	152,055	99.0%
EOC Biology	630	61.5%	84,980	94.2%

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Students in online school programs met standard on the assessment at a lower rate than the state average; the subject areas with the smallest gaps were reading (7.3 percent gap), writing (9.3 percent gap), and biology (10.6 percent gap). The gaps were more significant in the subjects of math and science. Online students taking the science MSP met standard 18.4 percent lower than the state average; online students taking the math MSP met standard at a rate 22.9 percent lower; and students in the math EOC exam were 24.3 percent lower. (Comparisons are for the percentage of students who met standard, excluding those with no score.)

Complete results are available in Appendix D.

The scores reported are for the assessments administered during spring 2012.

There are two measurements of assessment results that are useful for evaluating program effectiveness:

- **Percentage of students who met standard:** This measurement includes students in the tenth grade who did not test in the spring because they had previously passed the subject area of the test in question.
- **Percentage of students who met standard, excluding those with no score:** The first measurement counts any student who should have taken the test, but did not, resulting in a “0” score for the school. By contrast, this measurement includes only those students who actually took the assessment.

In the results shown on the following pages, scores for all available online schools have been averaged together.

Reading

With the small sample sizes (fewer than 500 students tested in each of the Grades 3–7), we would expect some variability in the scores. So, the tenth grade scores are perhaps a more reliable measure of online school performance. With the “no score” students removed from the equation, the tenth grade online students met standard at a rate of 82.0 percent, two percentage points of the state average.

Figure 19: Reading, Percent of Students that Met Standard Without Previous Pass, 2011–12

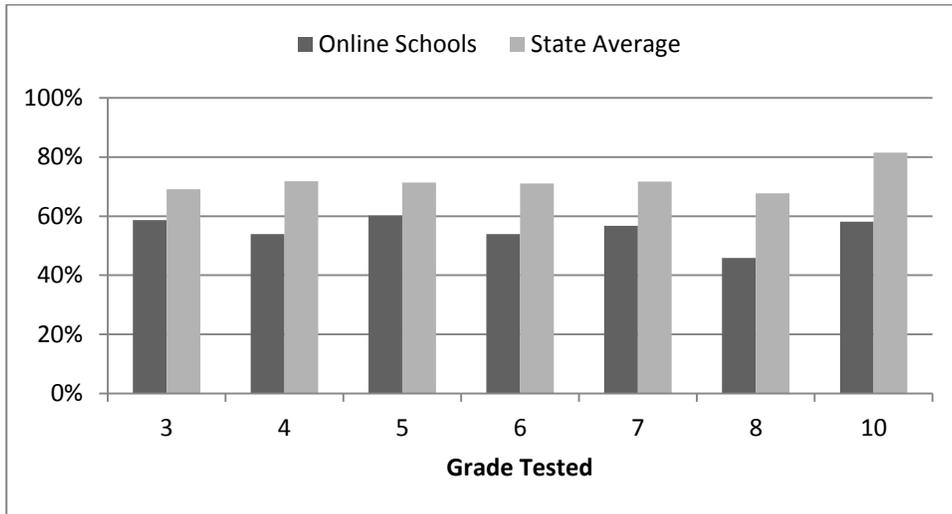


Figure 20: Reading, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, 2011–12

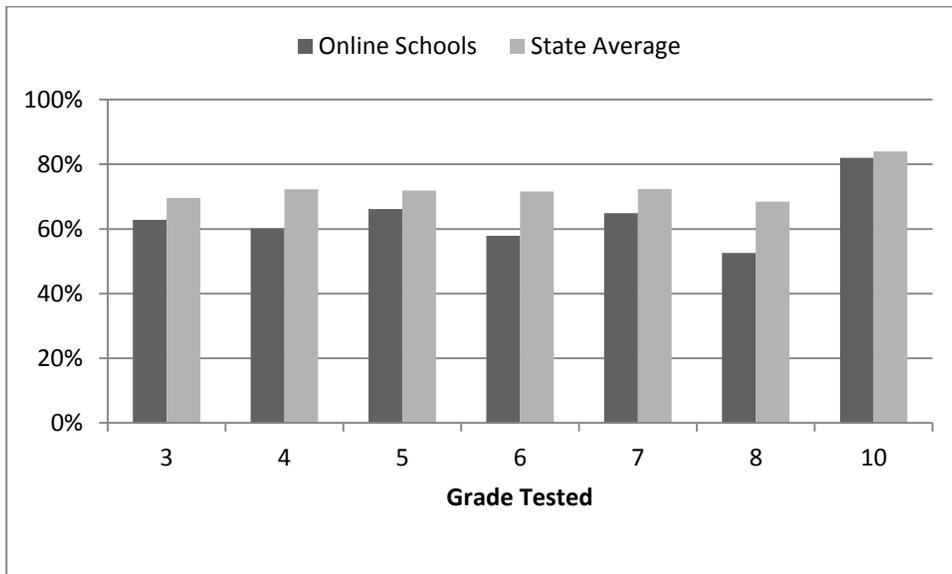


Table 29: Reading, Percent of Students that Met Standard, 2011–12

Grade	Met Standard		Met Standard Excluding No Score	
	Online Schools	State Average	Online Schools	State Average
3	58.7%	69.1%	62.8%	69.6%
4	53.9%	71.8%	60.2%	72.3%
5	60.2%	71.4%	66.2%	71.9%
6	53.9%	71.0%	57.9%	71.5%
7	56.7%	71.7%	64.9%	72.4%
8	45.9%	67.7%	52.6%	68.4%
10	58.1%	81.5%	82.0%	84.0%
All Grades	54.8%	72.0%	65.5%	72.8%

Figure 21: Reading, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year

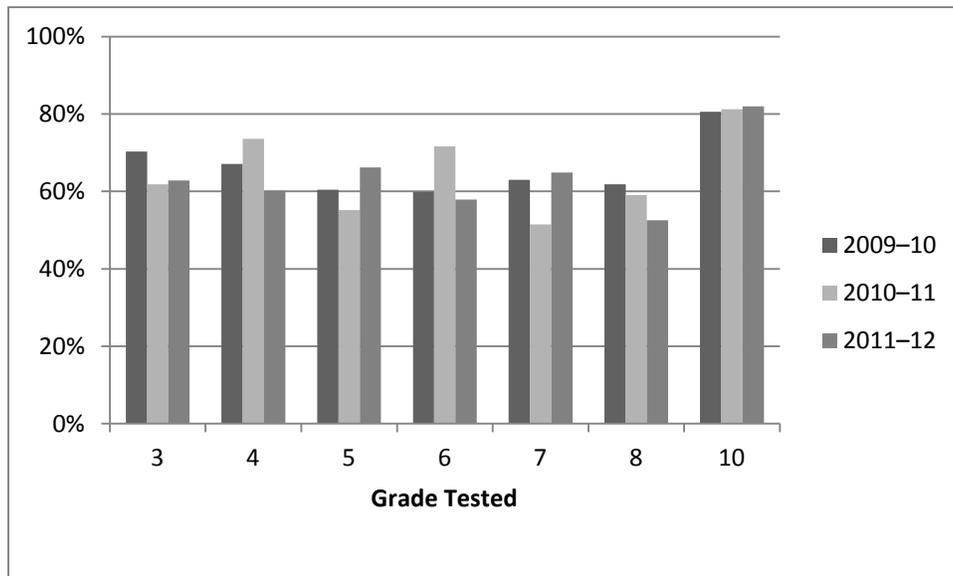


Table 30: Reading, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year

Grade	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
3	70.3%	61.8%	62.8%
4	67.1%	73.6%	60.2%
5	60.4%	55.2%	66.2%
6	59.9%	71.6%	57.9%
7	63.0%	51.5%	64.9%
8	61.8%	59.0%	52.6%
10	80.6%	81.2%	82.0%

Math MSP and HSPE

Although the math results for online students have the same low sample sizes as mentioned earlier, it is clear that online students met standard at a much lower rate than the state average.

Figure 22: Math, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Without Previous Pass, 2011–12

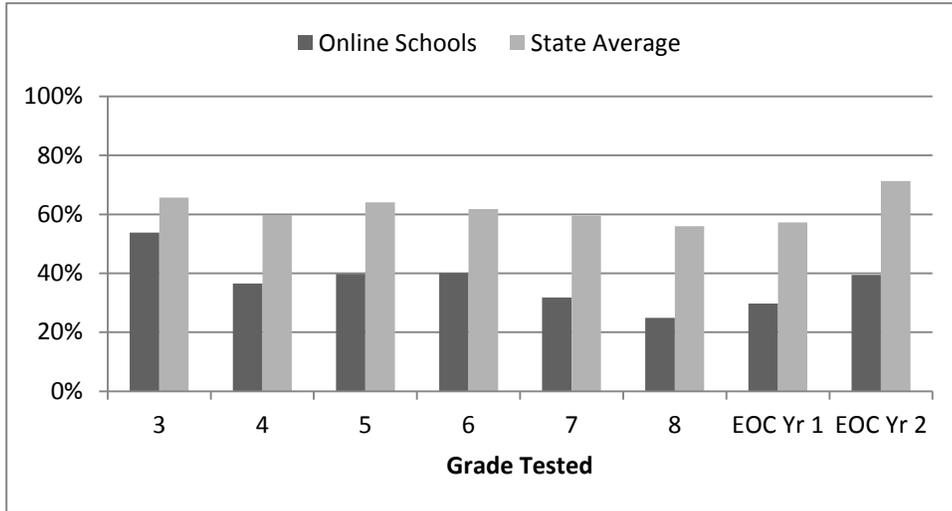


Figure 23: Math, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, 2011–12

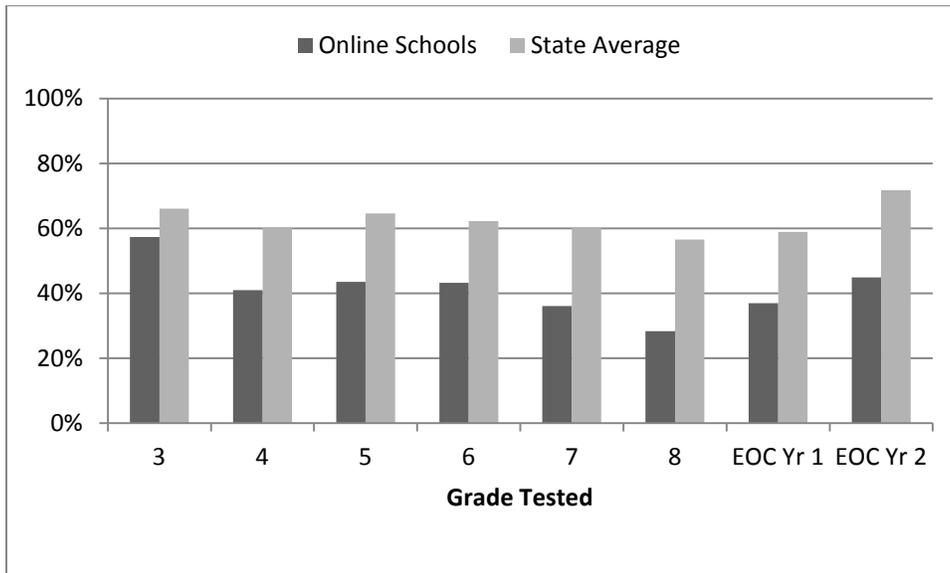


Table 31: Math, Percent of Students that Met Standard, 2011–12

Grade	Met Standard		Met Standard Excluding No Score	
	Online Schools	State Average	Online Schools	State Average
3	53.8%	65.7%	57.4%	66.1%
4	36.5%	59.8%	41.0%	60.1%
5	39.8%	64.1%	43.6%	64.6%
6	40.1%	61.8%	43.2%	62.3%
7	31.8%	59.6%	36.1%	60.1%
8	24.9%	55.9%	28.4%	56.5%
All Grades (MSP)	34.8%	61.2%	38.7%	61.6%
EOC Yr 1	29.8%	57.3%	37.0%	59.0%
EOC Yr 2	39.4%	71.3%	44.9%	71.8%
All EOC	32.5%	62.3%	39.3%	63.6%

Figure 24: Math, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year

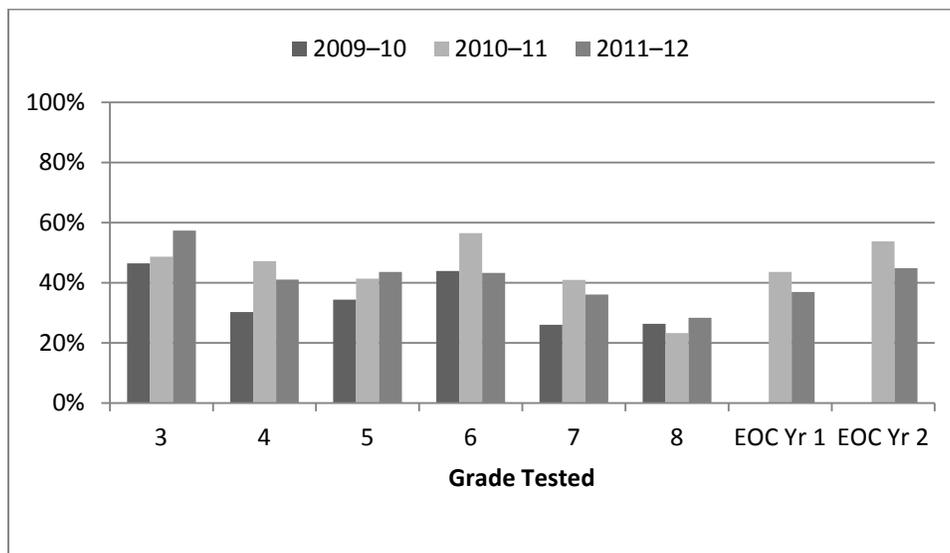


Table 32: Math, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year

Grade	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
3	46.5%	48.7%	57.4%
4	30.3%	47.2%	41.0%
5	34.4%	41.4%	43.6%
6	43.9%	56.5%	43.2%
7	26.0%	41.0%	36.1%
8	26.3%	23.3%	28.4%
EOC Yr 1		43.6%	37.0%
EOC Yr 2		53.8%	44.9%

Writing

In 2010, tenth grade online school students met standard at nearly the same rate as the state average, while students in fourth and seventh grade lagged behind. The 2011 data showed a similar pattern, albeit with a slightly larger gap at the tenth grade level. The pattern continued in 2012, but with another decline in tenth grade performance.

Figure 25: Writing, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Without Previous Pass, 2011–12

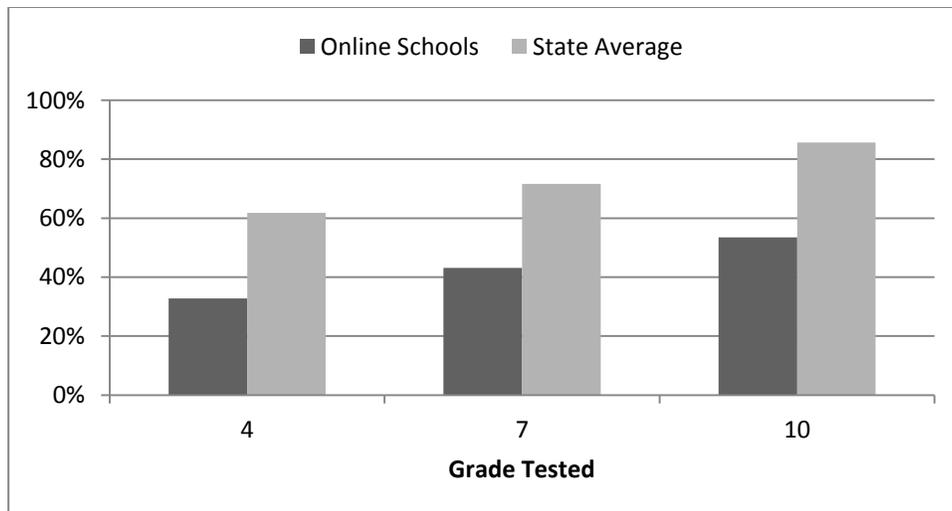


Figure 26: Writing, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, 2011–12

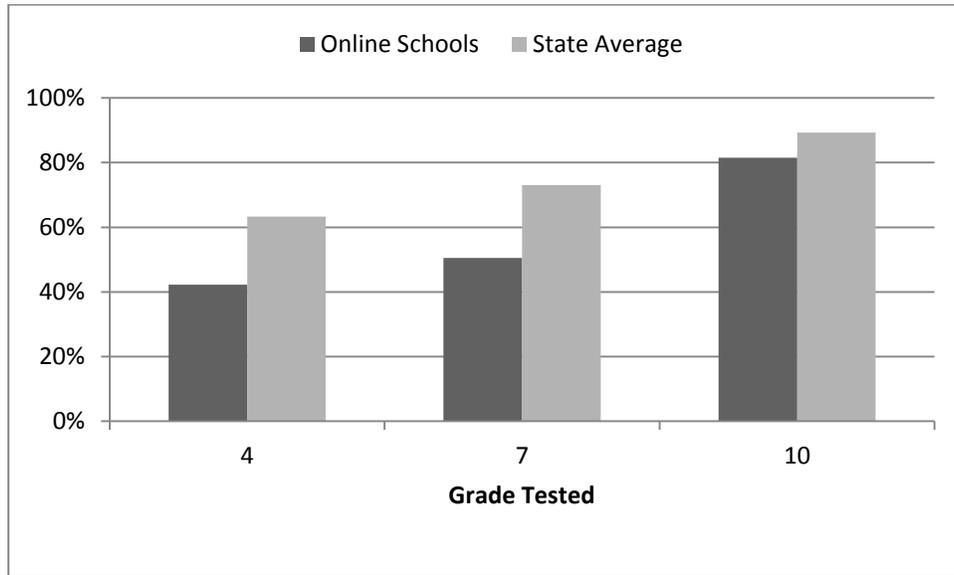


Table 33: Writing, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, 2011–12

Grade	Met Standard		Met Standard Excluding No Score	
	Online Schools	State Average	Online Schools	State Average
4	32.7%	61.8%	42.3%	63.3%
7	43.2%	71.6%	50.6%	73.1%
10	53.5%	85.7%	81.5%	89.3%
All Grades	47.8%	73.0%	65.8%	75.1%

Figure 27: Writing, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year

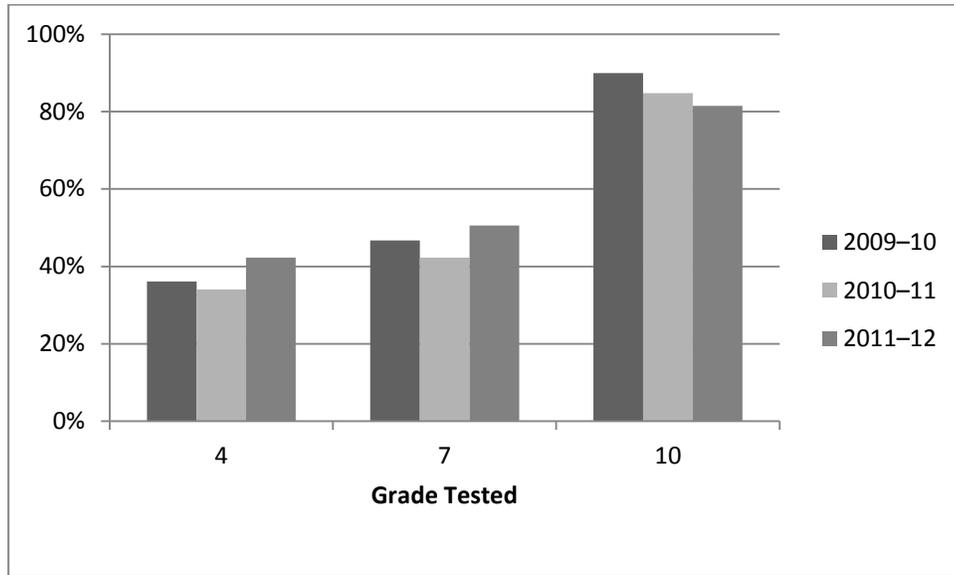


Table 34: Writing, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year

Grade	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
4	36.1%	34.1%	42.3%
7	46.7%	42.3%	50.6%
10	89.9%	84.8%	81.5%

Science

Students in online schools fell short of the state average in both the science MSP and the biology EOC exam. Compared to 2011, the 2012 scores rose slightly in fifth grade and were quite similar in eighth grade.

Figure 28: Science, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Without Previous Pass, 2011–12

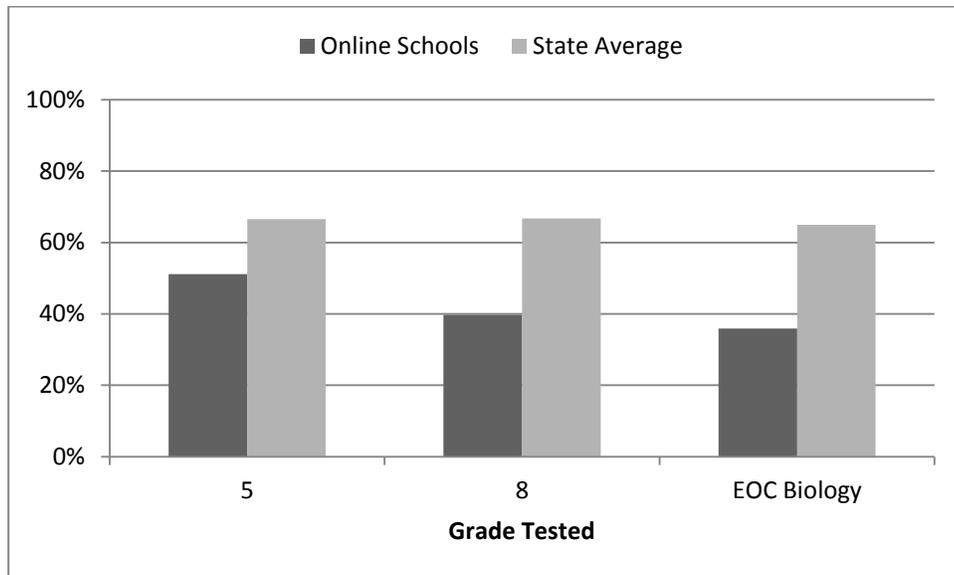


Figure 29: Science, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, 2011–12

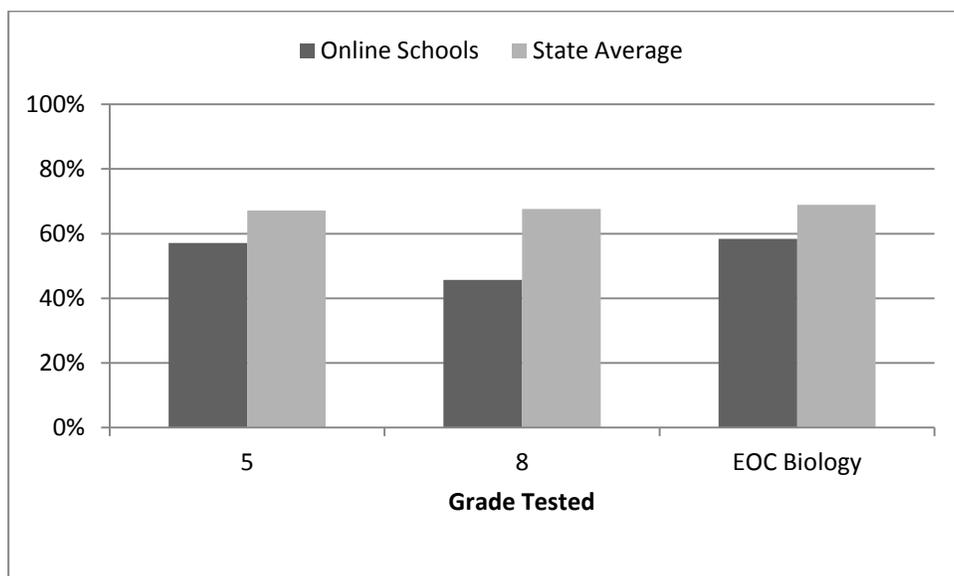


Table 35: Science, Percent of Students that Met Standard, 2011–12

Grade	Met Standard		Met Standard Excluding No Score	
	Online Schools	State Average	Online Schools	State Average
5	51.1%	66.6%	57.1%	67.1%
8	39.7%	66.8%	45.7%	67.6%
All Grades (MSP)	42.8%	66.7%	48.9%	67.4%
Biology EOC	35.9%	64.9%	58.4%	69.0%

Figure 30: Science, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year

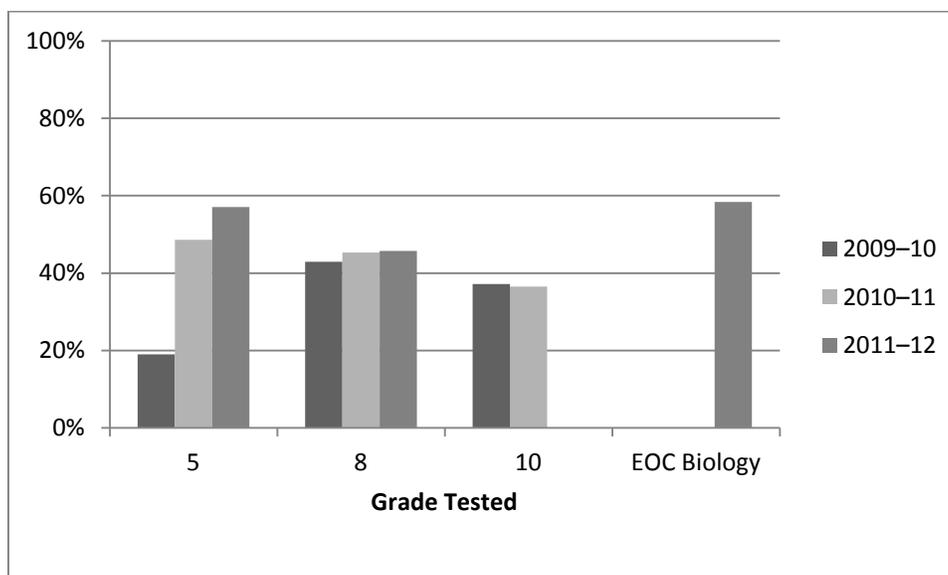


Table 36: Science, Percent of Online Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results, by Year

Grade	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
5	19.0%	48.6%	57.1%
8	42.9%	45.3%	45.7%
10	37.2%	36.5%	
EOC Biology			58.4%

Student Achievement: Completion, Passing, and Grades

CEDARS provides us with data on course completions and grades through “grade history” data submitted by school districts to OSPI. Grade histories are only submitted for students in Grades 9–12, so we do not have any grade-based achievement data for students in Grades K–8.

COMPLETION RATES

For grade history data from CEDARS, the definition of “**completion rate**” is:

The completion rate is the percentage of total enrollments where the student was not marked as withdrawn (“W”) or no credit (“NC”), and for which the student received a final grade.

A course withdrawal does not necessarily imply failure, as many courses are dropped, especially early in the course, for reasons independent of the student’s or provider’s performance in the course. A student may withdraw from a course due to a schedule change, for example, or a realization that the course content or environment does not match his or her educational needs. In some cases, however, a dropped course does represent a failed course. Unfortunately, the data set available to us does not explain why a student dropped the course, so we do not have insight into that aspect.

Methodology for NC grades

In previous reports, we noted some variation from district to district in terms of when a program awarded a “NC”, “W”, or “F.” Since the completion of the last report to the Legislature, we have followed up with many of the districts that reported online enrollments to better understand their grading practices. Broadly, there are three schools of thought with regards to the use of the “NC” grade. The first type only awards “NC” in rare circumstances, preferring to either assign a “W” for a withdrawn course. The second type of district uses “NC” to designate a dropped course. The third type uses “NC” as a proxy for a failed course, assigning that grade rather than a “F”.

“NC” as exception:

“If students are dropped from a course for a lack of progress they receive a failing grade. We occasionally give students NC or W but those are rare situations where students can't complete the course for legitimate reasons around health or family issues.”

“The current practice...is to allow students to drop a course with parent permission through the 20th day of the semester with a "W" grade. Any requests to drop a course after that date are subject to review by counselor and administration to determine if a course reduction is necessary for an intervention plan, if there are other valid extenuating circumstances or if there are other relevant issues at hand. Once these things are considered, a grade of either "W" or "F" is recorded for any dropped semester course.”

“We have a withdrawal period built into our policies and if a student withdraws from the class prior to that date, then the grade will reflect a "W". If they don't withdraw they are expected to complete the class for a grade. We don't give "NC" and follow a traditional grading scale.”

“NC” to designate dropped courses:

“Students have 20 school days from the start of a class to withdraw with a W grade. After 20 days any withdrawal is marked as a NC.”

“We do not mark courses withdrawn. Students earn an NC if dropped before nine weeks. After nine weeks the student is issued a final grade in the normal range F, C, B, A.”

“NC” in the Pass/Fail context:

“A student receives a Withdrawal/Drop if they have physically been withdrawn from the program, have transferred out of the district or if we dropped the class for a legit reason (for example: if a student already earned credit for the course, course was dropped per administrator and/or counselor, etc). Most of our online courses are credit retrieval and our online provider only issues a "C" for passing or "NC" for no credit as final grades.”

“We put "NC" on a student's transcript if they don't finish the course before the end of their due date regardless of the reason.”

“‘No Credit’ is used if a student does not earn a D or higher grade upon completion of the course.”

“We seldom if ever use a W. Once a student has started an online course they receive a letter grade (A, B, or C) if they successfully complete the class with a 70 percent or better. They receive an NC if they complete the class with less than 70 percent, or if they drop the class at any time, or withdraw from our program without completing the class successfully.”

Recognizing that there is significant variation between districts, we will remain consistent with our 2010–11 report and group the “NC” with the “W.” (This methodology was a departure from the 2009–10 report, where we grouped the grade “NC,” or no credit, as an “F.”)

Completion Rates

Of the 60,273 online courses where CEDARS has grade history data, 90.1 percent (54,296) were completed. By comparison, students completed 97.0 percent of the 3,688,830 non-online course enrollments with CEDARS grade history data.

Using the same calculation (including NC as non-completed courses), the 2011–12 rate is higher than the 79.1 percent completion rate for online courses taken during 2010–11. But, the 2011–12 is similar to the 2009–10 rate of 89.3 percent, raising the possibility that 2010–11’s rate was an aberration. Data from future years will establish a more accurate picture of the trends.

**Table 37: Course Completion Rates For Large Online Programs
(more than 500 enrollments)**

School	Online Enrollments (with grade histories)	Completed Courses	Completion Rate
Vancouver Virtual Learning Academy (Vancouver)	856	856	100.0%
Marysville On-line Move Up Program (Marysville)	1,162	1,158	99.7%
Insight School of Washington (Quillayute Valley)	19,776	18,770	94.9%
Phoenix Program (Puyallup)	717	678	94.6%
Internet Academy (Federal Way)	1,274	1,181	92.7%
Heritage High School (Evergreen)	658	605	91.9%
Columbia Tech High (White Salmon Valley)	534	478	89.5%
Bethel Online Academy (Bethel)	1,252	1,096	87.5%
WAVA (Monroe)	10,155	8,619	84.9%
iQ Academy Washington (Evergreen)	3,131	2,648	84.6%
Kent Phoenix Academy (Kent)	1,212	1,003	82.8%
Yakima Online (Yakima)	963	789	81.9%
Washington Virtual Academy (Omak)	3,017	2,261	74.9%
Edmonds Independent Learning (Edmonds)	672	469	69.8%

Although programmatic differences undoubtedly account for much of the variation between schools, some of the variation is likely due to differing grading policies. Individual school districts set standards for when a student is considered to have withdrawn from a course, as opposed to having failed a course. So, it can be difficult to compare rates from school to school, as each school may be using a different standard.

PASS RATES

Our definition of a “**pass rate**” is:

Pass rate is the percentage of total completions where the student received a 70 percent or higher grade (A, B, C, or Pass) in a course. It is calculated based on the provider’s Washington State enrollments for a given school year. If Washington-specific figures are not available, national statistics for the provider will be used.

When examining online schools using data from CEDARS, we have the flexibility to report data in two different ways: courses passed with a C- or better and courses passed with a D or better. This helps to account for the fact that districts often have different definitions of a passed course, some including D grades as passing and others not.

Of the 54,296 completed courses, 62.8 percent passed with a C- or better and 75.4 percent passed with a D or better. Statewide, of the total 3,577,627 completed non-online courses reported in CEDARS, 83.4 percent passed with a C- or better and 92.2 percent passed with a D or better. Note, again, that the pass rate calculation is based on completed courses, as dropped or withdrawn courses are removed from the equation.

Among all online enrollments, the 2011–12 passing rates are higher than the 2010–11 rates, with a nearly five percent rise in the C- or better rate.

Table 38: Course Completion and Pass Rates From 2009–10 to 2011–12

	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
Completed Courses (less W/NC)	45,387	52,949	54,296
Pass Rate (C or better)	47.9%	57.9%	62.8%
Pass Rate (D or better)	60.9%	72.2%	75.4%

Table 39: Course Pass Rates by School, 2011–12

School	Completed Enrollments	Pass Rate (C or Better)	Pass Rate (D or Better)
Edmonds Independent Learning (Edmonds)	469	74.8%	100.0%
Phoenix Program (Puyallup)	678	78.2%	99.9%
Heritage High School (Evergreen)	605	99.7%	99.7%
Yakima Online (Yakima)	789	97.5%	98.6%
Columbia Tech High (White Salmon Valley)	478	86.6%	90.2%
Marysville On-line Move Up Program (Marysville)	1,158	62.8%	86.4%
Vancouver Virtual Learning Academy (Vancouver)	856	71.4%	86.1%
Kent Phoenix Academy (Kent)	1,003	64.4%	84.8%
WAVA (Monroe)	8,619	62.0%	74.4%
Internet Academy (Federal Way)	1,181	71.6%	72.1%
iQ Academy Washington (Evergreen)	2,648	55.1%	67.5%
Insight School of Washington (Quillayute Valley)	18,770	46.3%	63.6%
Bethel Online Academy (Bethel)	1,096	59.4%	59.5%
Washington Virtual Academy (Omak)	2,261	45.2%	58.8%

There is significant diversity in the pass rates among the schools with the largest online enrollment, from programs that pass nearly all of their students to others with completion rates below 50 percent.

A few notes on school-level data:

- Some programs appear to be using very different grading policies. For example, Heritage High School granted a large number of “P” grades, in addition to some letter grades. And, both Edmonds and Yakima had a large number of “NC” grades, which are taken out of the pass rate equations.
- Some programs on this list serve primarily full-time students (see page 28), while others cater to students enrolling in only one or two courses at a time.
- Washington Virtual Academy (WAVA) operates high school programs in both Monroe and Omak. The completion and pass rates are very different between the two districts, despite the fact that most aspects of the program are identical. When asked about this, WAVA pointed out that Omak has a much lower percentage of returning students, and they’ve noticed that student performance tends to increase the longer a student stays in the program.

GRADES

CEDARS provides us with a breakdown of grades earned in online courses.

Grades are reported using the following key:

Table 40: Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Grading Scale
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
E	0
F	0
P	Pass
N	No Pass
CR	Credit
NC	No Credit
S	Satisfactory
U	Unsatisfactory
W	Withdraw

Figure 31: Percentage of Grades Earned, 2011–12

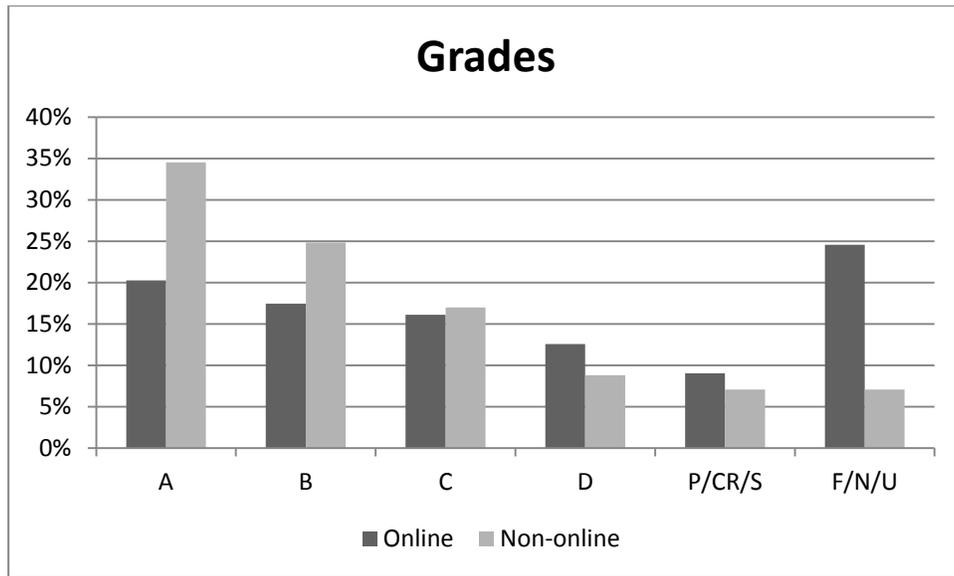


Table 41: Percentage of Grades Earned, 2011–12

	Online	Non-online
Completed Courses	54,296	3,577,627
Completion Rate	90.1%	97.0%
A	20.2%	34.5%
B	17.4%	24.8%
C	16.1%	17.0%
D	12.6%	8.8%
P/CR/S	9.0%	7.1%
F/N/U	24.6%	7.1%

Figure 32: Percentage of Grades Earned in Online Courses by Year

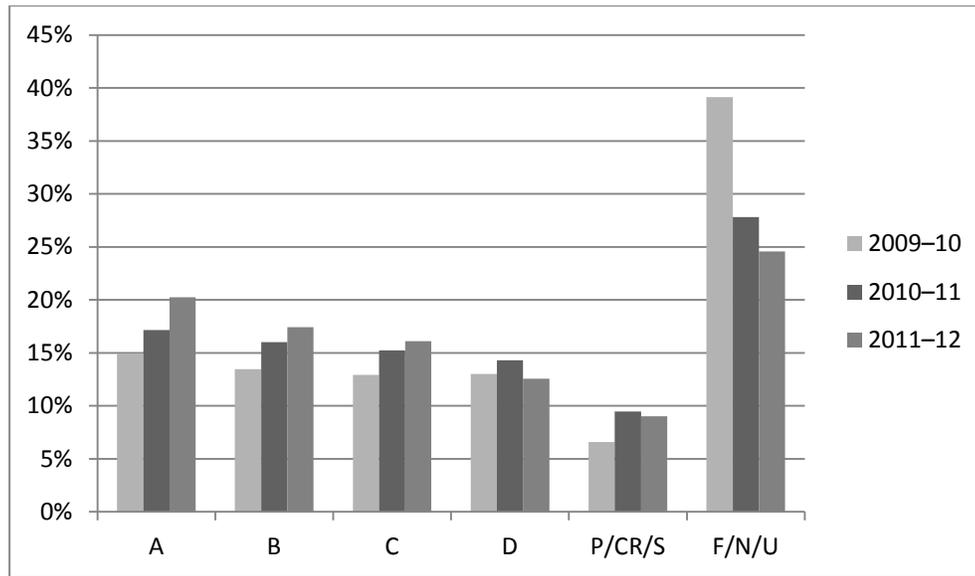


Table 42: Percentage of Grades Earned in Online Courses by Year

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Completed Courses	45,387	52,949	54,296
Completion Rate	89.3%	79.1%	90.1%
A	14.9%	17.1%	20.2%
B	13.4%	16.0%	17.4%
C	12.9%	15.2%	16.1%
D	13.0%	14.3%	12.6%
P/CR/S	6.6%	9.5%	9.0%
F/N/U	39.1%	27.8%	24.6%

Looking at both the comparison between online and non-online courses, and the year-to-year comparisons, we note a number of interesting data points:

- The 79.1 percent completion rate in 2010-11 may have been an anomaly. The completion rate for 2010-11 is approximately ten percentage points lower than the years before or after.
- As with previous years, the grading patterns shown in online courses bear almost no resemblance to the patterns for the state as a whole, except for the similar rates of students earning a grade of C.

Due to the ambiguities behind this data set, it can be difficult to draw firm conclusions about student performance in online courses. Some issues to consider when interpreting this data include:

- Although online learning models vary from provider to provider, online courses can be more proficiency-based than traditional classroom settings. In this model, students can only move forward in their courses when they have mastered the content they have worked on to date. Students who are not able to progress in their courses, for any number of reasons, are likely to be given failing grades, and often fairly early on in the process. This trend is balanced somewhat by a much higher percentage of courses marked as W or NC, as students who are not making progress are dropped rather than being awarded a letter grade. The inconsistencies found in district-level grading policies make it very difficult to accurately determine the cause.
- Online courses are often considered to be more rigorous than face-to-face courses. By removing many of the distractions of the traditional classroom environment, online courses can often cover more material. And, monitoring student progress is easier in the online environment. As every student interaction and response can be monitored in an online course, online course providers and programs often have significantly more data on students than their face-to-face counterparts, thus likely raising the bar by which student achievement is measured.
- Online learning programs attract a very diverse student population in terms of prior academic achievement and motivation for using online learning. Many programs specifically target students who are at risk of dropping out, and many students come to online learning programs having had limited academic success in the past. Although programs that advertise to this population must be prepared to meet their academic needs, clearly the population being served has some effect on the overall performance.
- Online learning is not necessarily appropriate for all students, and existing online school programs may not filter out students who may be a poor fit for online learning early enough in the admissions process. Many of the students in online school programs actively choose that learning option and, in many cases, they transferred into a new school district to access the program. But, learning online generally requires that students have good reading skills, as most of the lessons are delivered through reading texts. And, students must have the discipline to work in a non-school setting. So, some of the failures might be from students who were not well suited to online learning.

None of these factors should, however, absolve online programs from taking responsibility for student outcomes. Programs with low completion and/or pass rates should closely examine their practices, as the high failure rates seen in some programs are not acceptable.

Withdrawal and Graduation Rates

Traditional graduation rates can be difficult to accurately calculate for online school programs. Graduation rates for 2011–12 will not be finalized until after the writing of this report, due to the process by which both districts and OSPI verify and analyze the data. We do have graduation rate data available from 2010–11, but this data set should be used with some caution due to the following concerns:

1. As discussed earlier, the majority of online learners appear to be enrolled in online courses on a part-time basis. Fewer than 15 percent of online students took enough online courses to be considered full-time online students during 2011–12. Only one program, WAVA (Monroe) had more than half of their students enrolled on a full-time basis, and only eight programs had more than half of their students enrolled in at least five courses during the entire school year. Given this, we face a number of issues, including:
 - a. If we see graduation rate as a tool to measure the effectiveness of a program, a large number of part-time students involved in the analysis can make it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the online program, as there is at least one other non-online program that was providing courses to the student.
 - b. For most schools, we simply do not have many full-time students upon which to base an analysis. Including part-time students, as is done, only serves to muddy the analysis.
2. There appears to be a fairly high level of mobility in online school programs. In the traditional schooling environment, it is common for students to attend the same school for Grades 9–12. With online, many students attend an online school for just a single year or two. With the standard graduation rate calculation, those students are included in the analysis. Given that a high percentage of students have not attended a school for all four years of high school, graduation rate may not fully speak to a school's effectiveness.
3. The rate of change within the online learning field shows that a number of the schools included in the 2010–11 graduation rate data are no longer operating. Of the twelve online school programs for which we have data, three have since ceased operations: Bethel Online Academy, Productive Learning, and Kaplan Academy of Washington.

Of the programs identified, the adjusted actual four-year cohort graduation rate (for those programs with graduates) varied from 8.8 percent to 40.0 percent. Only WAVA Monroe (154 in the adjusted cohort, 27.3 percent graduation rate) and Insight School of Washington (1,133 in cohort, 19.1 percent graduation rate) had cohorts of over 100 students. The complete report is included in Appendix E.

Given the limitations of graduation rates, we have used the withdrawal rate in an attempt to speak to online program effectiveness. Whenever a student leaves a school, the reason is recorded using a withdrawal code, as displayed in Table 43. We examined records for twelfth grade students based on enrollment data, and found the last enrollment record for a student. The online student data set includes any twelfth grade student who took at least one online course, including students who graduated from online schools, who attended an online school but transferred elsewhere, and students who took individual online courses at a non-online school. For comparison, we also examined records for twelfth graders who did not take an online course during 2011–12.

Table 43: Withdrawal Codes for 2011–12 Students in Grade 12

Code	Withdrawal Description	Non-online	Non-online	Online	Online
None	Still enrolled	8,875	8.0%	119	9.4%
G0	Graduated with regular high school diploma	65,316	58.6%	428	33.8%
C1	Confirmed receipt of General Education Development (GED) certificate	547	0.5%	0	0.0%
C2	Confirmed completion of Individualized Education Program (IEP)	185	0.2%	2	0.2%
T0	Confirmed transfer out of the school district	13,051	11.7%	192	15.2%
T1	Confirmed transfer out of the school within district	11,626	10.4%	334	26.4%
D1	Expelled or suspended and did not return	109	0.1%	0	0.0%
D2	Attended 4 years or more and did not graduate (student drops or ages out)	1,361	1.2%	15	1.2%
D3	Lack of academic progress or poor grades	929	0.8%	17	1.3%
D4	School not for me	611	0.5%	6	0.5%
D5	Married or needs to support family	14	0.0%	1	0.1%
D6	Pregnant or had baby	81	0.1%	2	0.2%
D7	Offered training or chose to work	201	0.2%	1	0.1%
D8	Chose to stay home	424	0.4%	9	0.7%
D9	Drugs or alcohol related	30	0.0%	0	0.0%
D0	Other (dropped out, but reason unknown)	1,499	1.3%	25	2.0%
U1	Unknown	4,002	3.6%	84	6.6%
U2	Enrolled in prior year, but no show this year	1,086	1.0%	9	0.7%
U3	Transfer reported by student (not confirmed)	1,273	1.1%	21	1.7%
ZZ	Deceased	30	0.0%	1	0.1%
GA	Graduated with Associates Degree	187	0.2%	0	0.0%
	Total	111,437	100.0%	1,266	100.0%

In the online students data set, 1,266 twelfth graders took at least one online course. Of those, 430 (34.0 percent) had a year-end status that indicated a successful outcome, such as graduation or completion of an individualized education program (codes G0, GA, and C2). Of the 111,437 twelfth grade students who had not taken an online course, 65,688 (58.9 percent) had a successful outcome.

Given the large number of students enrolled in online experiences in a part-time manner, we also examined students who had taken four or more online courses and students who had taken ten or more online courses. Students in four or more online courses had a successful outcome in only 26.5 percent (100) of cases. Given that these students may have been looking to online courses as a means to make up needed credits, it is difficult to assign causality to the students' use of online learning and their graduation status. Students in ten or more online courses—representing a full-time course load for the year—fared better, successfully completing in 34.0 percent of cases; there were only 33 such students, a number too small to draw a definitive conclusion.

There are a number of concerns found in this data:

- Compared to non-online students, a higher percentage of online students taking four or more online courses were listed as “still enrolled,” meaning that they are expected to return for a fifth year of high school. Eighteen percent of students taking four or more online courses, and 27.8 percent of those taking ten or more courses were listed as still enrolled. In practice, those students should be considered to be at a high risk for dropping out.
- Online students have a higher rate of both confirmed and unconfirmed transfers out of the district. In practice, this could mean the student moved to another state, and therefore does not appear elsewhere in Washington’s educational records. It could also mean that the student transferred, but either has not enrolled in another district, or has enrolled but no data has yet been reported. Given the higher rate amongst online students, we assume that many of these students have not, in fact, moved out of state. Hopefully they will enroll in another district as students in this situation are at high risk for dropping out.
- Online students also have a higher rate of withdrawals marked as “unknown.” As is the case when students are marked as transferring out-of-state, these students have yet to re-enroll in another Washington school, and they are at a high risk for dropping out.

Taken as a whole, these figures are concerning, as it appears that a high percentage of online students either drop out or are at risk of dropping out.

There are several factors that somewhat mitigate the concerns presented here. Online learning is often seen as the option of last resort for students who are credit deficient and at risk of dropping out. Many of the twelfth grade students taking individual online courses are likely doing it to make up a previously failed course. We would expect to see a higher dropout rate among credit-deficient students.

Teacher/Student Ratios

ALE programs are required to report the number of certificated instructional staff (CIS) in each program, and their ratio of CIS per 1,000 students is calculated.

In non-ALE settings, districts are required to maintain a ratio of 46 CIS per 1,000 students across the entire district. ESHB 2065 (2011) exempted ALE programs from this ratio, but the figure remains useful when comparing online programs to traditional programs.

Looking at the three types of ALE programs, we see that digital/online programs are staffing, on average, at 42.7 CIS per 1,000 students. This staffing level is slightly below the 46/1000 standard. Parent partnership programs staffed at a much lower rate—27.0 CIS per 1,000 students.

**Table 44: Certificated Instructional Staff (CIS) per 1,000 Students
by ALE Program Type**

Program Type	Annual Average Student FTE	Annual Average CIS	CIS per 1,000 Students
Contract Based	8,294.2	444.0	53.5
Digital/Online	8,027.8	342.8	42.7
Parent Partnership	12,532.3	338.0	27.0
Total	28,854.4	1,124.8	39.0

Note: This calculation excluded programs that did not report the number of CIS in 2011–12. It also excluded programs that reported less than five student FTE, as very small programs aren't necessarily representative of standard staffing practices.

**Table 45: CIS Ratios for ALE Digital/Online Programs
With More Than Five FTE CIS**

School District	School	Annual Average FTE	Annual Average CIS	CIS per 1,000 Students
Quillayute Valley	Insight School of Washington	1604.725	55.0	34.3
Omak	Washington Virtual Academy Omak High School	1297.215	48.0	37.0
Steilacoom Hist.	Washington Virtual Academy	1398.19	42.5	30.4
Monroe	WAVA	751.165	36.0	47.9
Tahoma	Tahoma Senior High School	5.8	19.0	3,275.9
East Valley (Yakima)	East Valley High School	10.99	16.0	1,455.9
Bethel	Bethel Online Academy	132.709	13.6	102.5
Evergreen (Clark)	iQ Academy Washington	320.968	12.5	38.9
Spokane	Lewis & Clark High School	38.42	10.4	270.7
Federal Way	Internet Academy	275.608	10.3	37.4
Longview	Longview School District	50.1	5.0	99.8
Walla Walla	Walla Walla High School	9.96	5.0	502.0

The complete list of program CIS ratios can be found in Appendix F.

Most of the large online school programs are staffed at a level below the 46/1,000 standard. The list also contains some clear outliers. These could be a result of data quality issues.

Student Satisfaction Survey

In January 2012, OSPI surveyed students and parents to examine student and family experiences with approved multidistrict online providers and to provide a way for prospective students, parents, and schools to compare the options available to them. Providers distributed the survey to enrolled students, and student/parent participation was not mandatory. The results of the survey, as well as all comments submitted by students and parents, are available on the OSPI Web site, displayed by provider, at <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/providers/>.

Some caveats should be noted with this data:

- Some programs had very low response rates.
- The survey included both online school programs and online course providers.
- The DLD instructed high school students to answer the survey on their own, middle school students could work with a parent, and parents were to answer on behalf of elementary-aged students.
- The charts in this section compare the 2012 responses with responses from May 2011.

DEMOGRAPHICS

What was the student's enrollment status?

Figure 33: Satisfaction Survey Enrollment Status

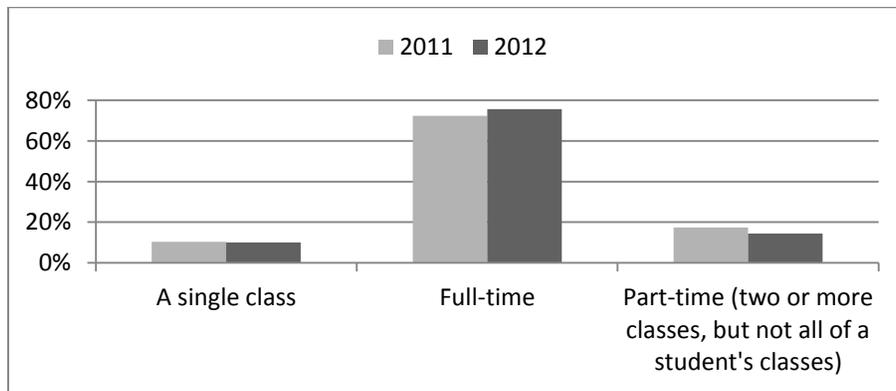


Table 46: Satisfaction Survey Enrollment Status

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
A single class	248	10.3%	243	10.0%
Full-time	1737	72.3%	1846	75.6%
Part-time (two or more classes, but not all of a student's classes)	417	17.4%	352	14.4%
Total	2402	100.0%	2441	100.0%

Note that most survey respondents were full-time students. This suggests that the demographic make-up of this survey does not represent that of online students as a whole in the state. It appears that many of the survey responses came from schools with high proportions of full-time students.

What were the grade levels of the students?

Figure 34: Satisfaction Survey Grade Levels

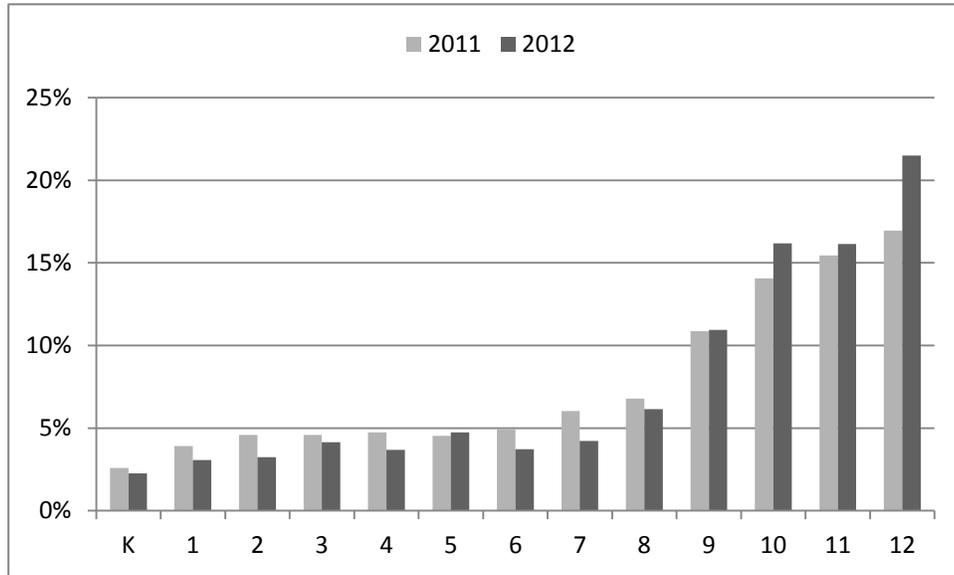


Table 47: Satisfaction Survey Grade Levels

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
K	62	2.6%	55	2.3%
1	94	3.9%	75	3.1%
2	110	4.6%	79	3.2%
3	110	4.6%	101	4.1%
4	114	4.7%	90	3.7%
5	109	4.5%	116	4.8%
6	118	4.9%	91	3.7%
7	145	6.0%	103	4.2%
8	163	6.8%	150	6.1%
9	261	10.9%	267	10.9%
10	338	14.1%	395	16.2%
11	371	15.4%	394	16.1%
12	407	16.9%	525	21.5%
Total	2402	100.0%	2441	100.0%

Who took this survey?

Figure 35: Satisfaction Survey Respondents

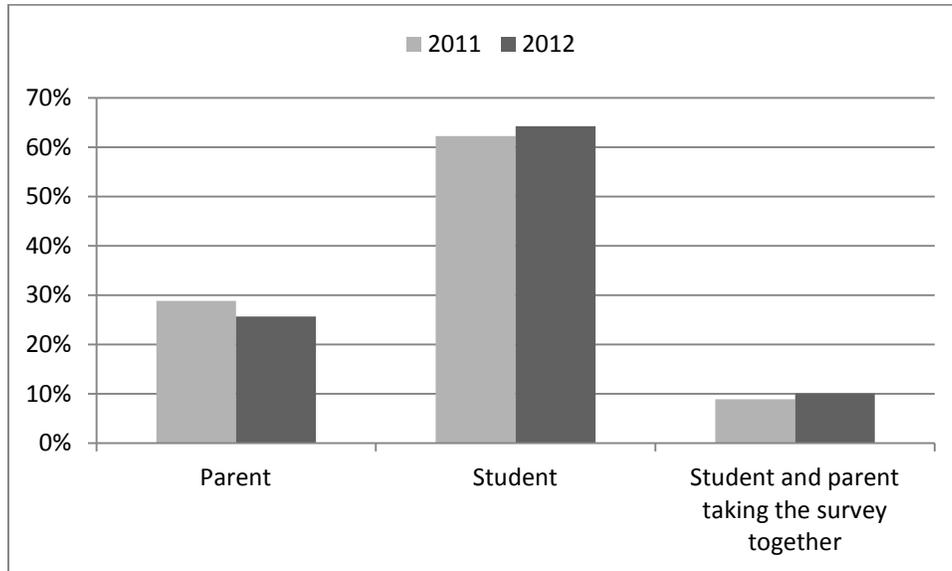


Table 48: Satisfaction Survey Respondents

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Parent	693	28.9%	626	25.6%
Student	1495	62.2%	1569	64.3%
Student and parent taking the survey together	214	8.9%	246	10.1%
Total	2402	100.0%	2441	100.0%

Providers

The average rating in the table below is based on answers to the question “Overall, how satisfied was the student with this provider?” (Scale: 5 = Very Satisfied; 4 = Somewhat Satisfied; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Somewhat unsatisfied; 1 = Unsatisfied .)

Table 49: Satisfaction Survey Provider Response Rates and Average Ratings

Provider	2011		2012	
	Responses	Average Rating	Responses	Average Rating
Apex Learning	0	n/a	4	4.8
Aventa Learning	40	4.0	0	n/a
Bethel Online Academy	23	3.3	75	3.8
Columbia Tech High	0	n/a	8	4.1
Columbia Virtual Academy	413	4.6	571	4.5
Connections Learning	0	n/a	2	n/a
DigiPen Institute of Technology - Online Academies	1	5.0	5	4.4
Federal Way Internet Academy	205	4.2	103	4.3
Giant Campus of Washington	33	4.1	147	4
Insight School of Washington	738	4.5	697	4.1
iQ Academy Washington	117	4.2	0	n/a
Marysville On-line Virtual Education Program	37	4.3	31	4.5
Northwest Allprep	25	4.3	73	4.4
OASIS K-12	0	n/a	13	4.8
Olympia Regional Learning Academy (iConnect Academy)	13	4.6	35	4.1
Red Comet	89	4.7	80	4.9
The American Academy / No Dropouts	57	4.4	93	4.4
Vancouver Virtual Learning Academy	47	4.0	80	4.2
Washington Academy of Arts & Technology and EV Online Learning	53	4.2	48	4.6
Washington Virtual Academy - Monroe	20	4.4	108	4.4
Washington Virtual Academy - Omak	151	4.6	130	4.6
Washington Virtual Academy - Steilacoom	340	4.8	138	4.7
Totals	2402		2441	

RESULTS

Overall, how satisfied was the student with this provider?

Survey respondents were less satisfied with the online provider in 2012 than in 2011.

Figure 36: Overall Satisfaction

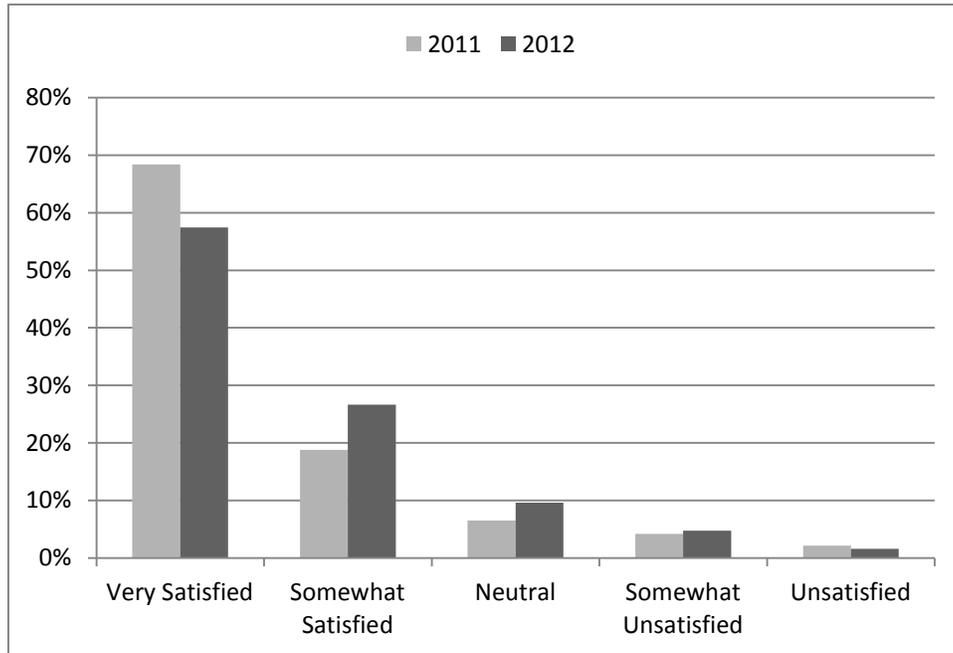


Table 50: Overall Satisfaction

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Very Satisfied	1643	68.4%	1400	57.4%
Somewhat Satisfied	451	18.8%	650	26.7%
Neutral	156	6.5%	234	9.6%
Somewhat Unsatisfied	101	4.2%	115	4.7%
Unsatisfied	51	2.1%	39	1.6%
Total	2402	100.0%	2438	100.0%

The enrollment process was clear and easy. Note: This question was asked only of students enrolled in online school programs, not online course providers, as online course providers do not have full control of the enrollment process. As a result, the number of responses is lower than the other survey totals.

Figure 37: Ease of Enrollment

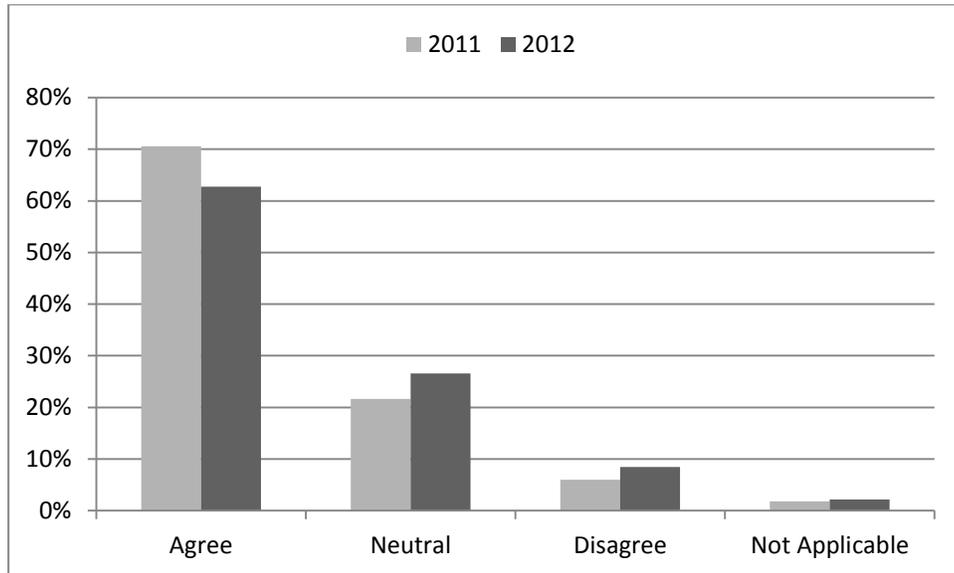


Table 51: Ease of Enrollment

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1465	70.6%	1296	62.8%
Neutral	449	21.6%	549	26.6%
Disagree	125	6.0%	175	8.5%
Not Applicable	37	1.8%	45	2.2%
Total	2076	100.0%	2065	100.0%

If there were enrollment issues, program staff resolved the issues in a clear and timely manner. Note: This question was asked only of students enrolled in online school programs, not online course providers, as online course providers do not have full control of the enrollment process. As a result, the number of responses is lower than the other survey totals.

Figure 38: Resolution of Enrollment Issues

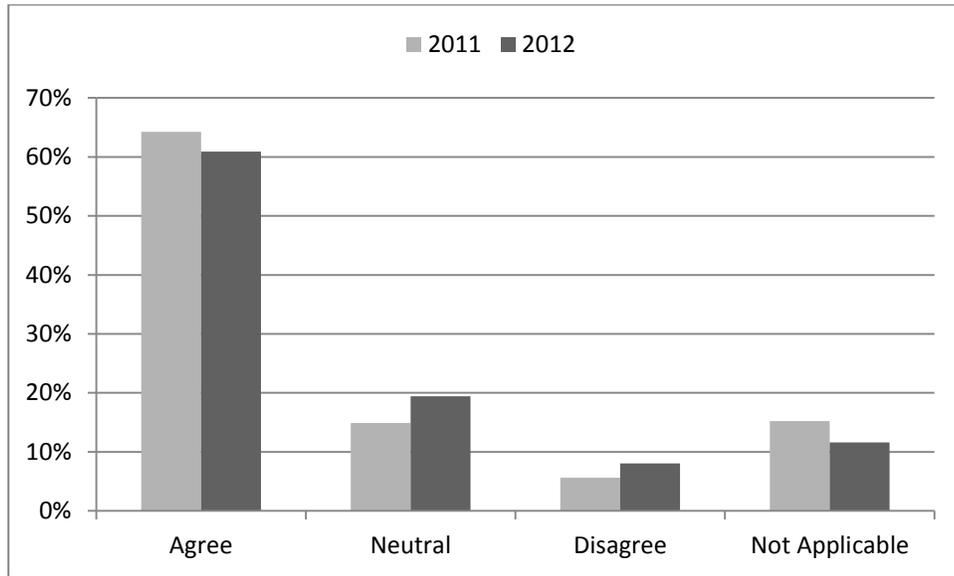


Table 52: Resolution of Enrollment Issues

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1334	64.3%	1258	60.9%
Neutral	309	14.9%	401	19.4%
Disagree	117	5.6%	166	8.0%
Not Applicable	316	15.2%	240	11.6%
Total	2076	100.0%	2065	100.0%

Once enrolled, it was easy to get started.

Figure 39: Ease of Starting

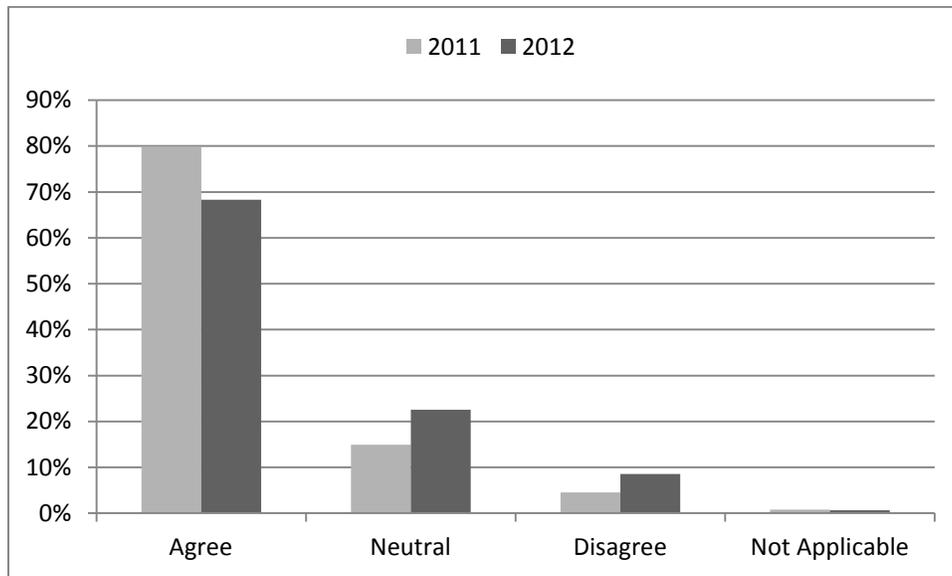


Table 53: Ease of Starting

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1916	79.8%	1667	68.3%
Neutral	358	14.9%	550	22.5%
Disagree	109	4.5%	209	8.6%
Not Applicable	19	0.8%	15	0.6%
Total	2402	100.0%	2441	100.0%

The online course met the student's academic needs.

Figure 40: Course Met Academic Needs

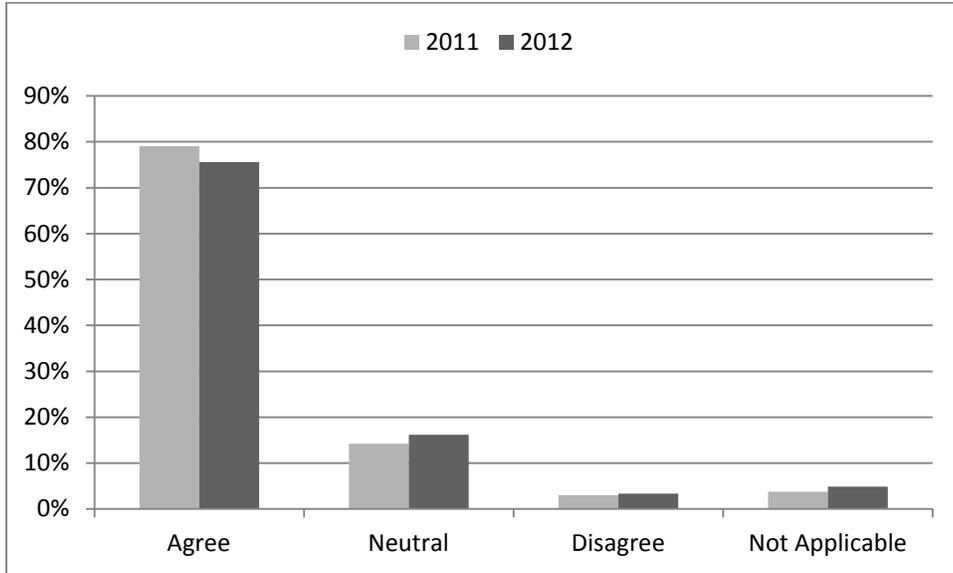


Table 54: Course Met Academic Needs

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1899	79.1%	1846	75.6%
Neutral	341	14.2%	394	16.1%
Disagree	72	3.0%	82	3.4%
Not Applicable	90	3.7%	119	4.9%
Total	2402	100.0%	2441	100.0%

The student felt well-served by the online teacher(s).

Figure 41: Well-Served by Online Teacher

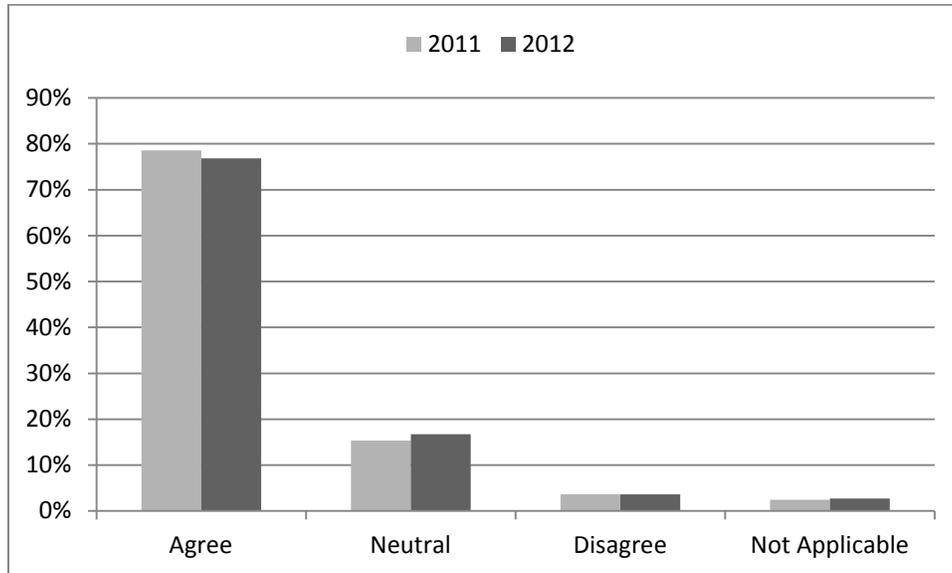


Table 55: Well-Served by Online Teacher

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1888	78.6%	1876	76.9%
Neutral	369	15.4%	409	16.8%
Disagree	87	3.6%	89	3.6%
Not Applicable	58	2.4%	67	2.7%
Total	2402	100.0%	2441	100.0%

The online course was easy to navigate and use.

Figure 42: Ease of Use

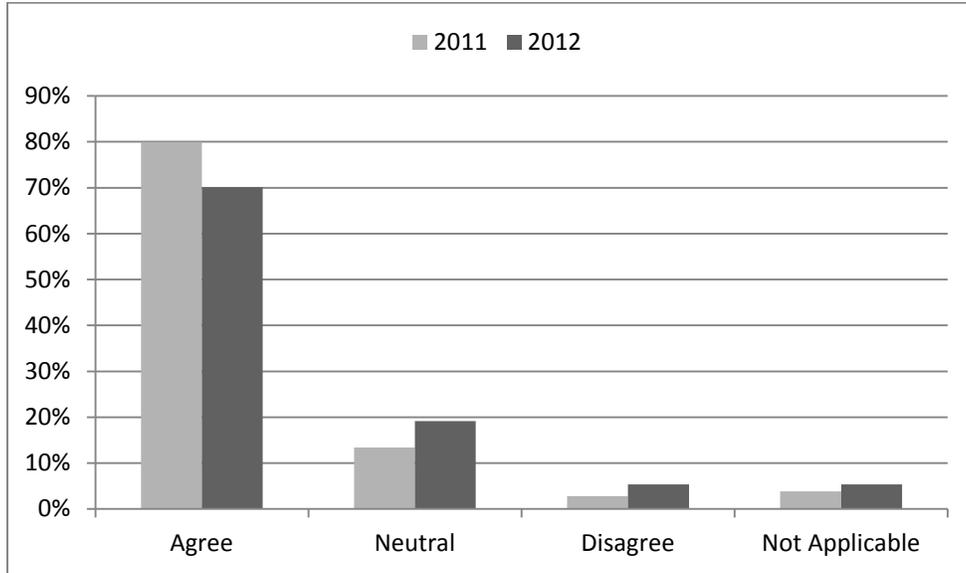


Table 56: Ease of Use

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1921	80.0%	1712	70.1%
Neutral	322	13.4%	467	19.1%
Disagree	67	2.8%	131	5.4%
Not Applicable	92	3.8%	131	5.4%
Total	2402	100.0%	2441	100.0%

The course/program schedule and progress reporting assisted the student in managing his/her time and priorities to stay on target with coursework.

Figure 43: Assistance With Time Mangement

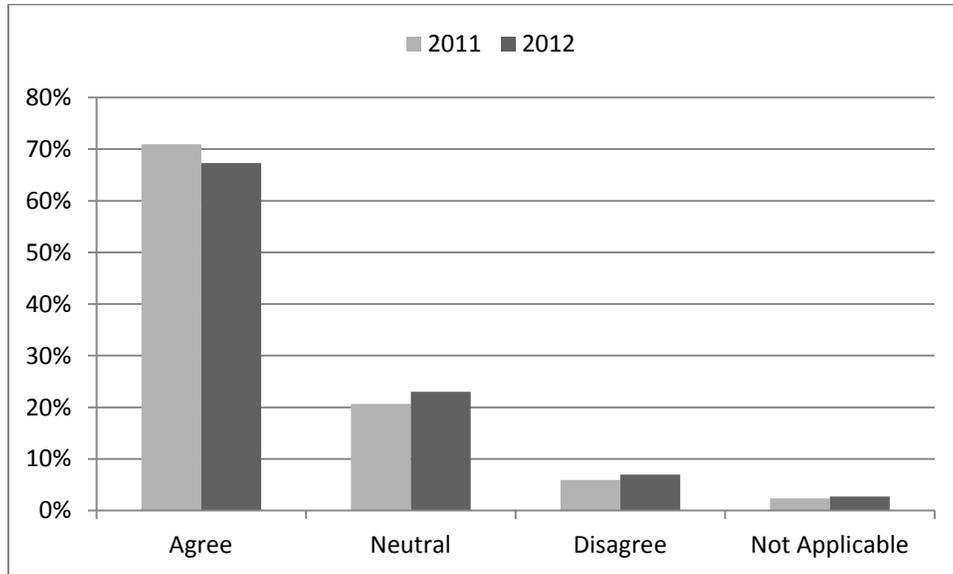


Table 57: Assistance With Time Mangement

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1705	71.0%	1643	67.3%
Neutral	497	20.7%	561	23.0%
Disagree	143	6.0%	170	7.0%
Not Applicable	57	2.4%	67	2.7%
Total	2402	100.0%	2441	100.0%

If needed, technical support was helpful.

Figure 44: Helpfulness of Technical Support

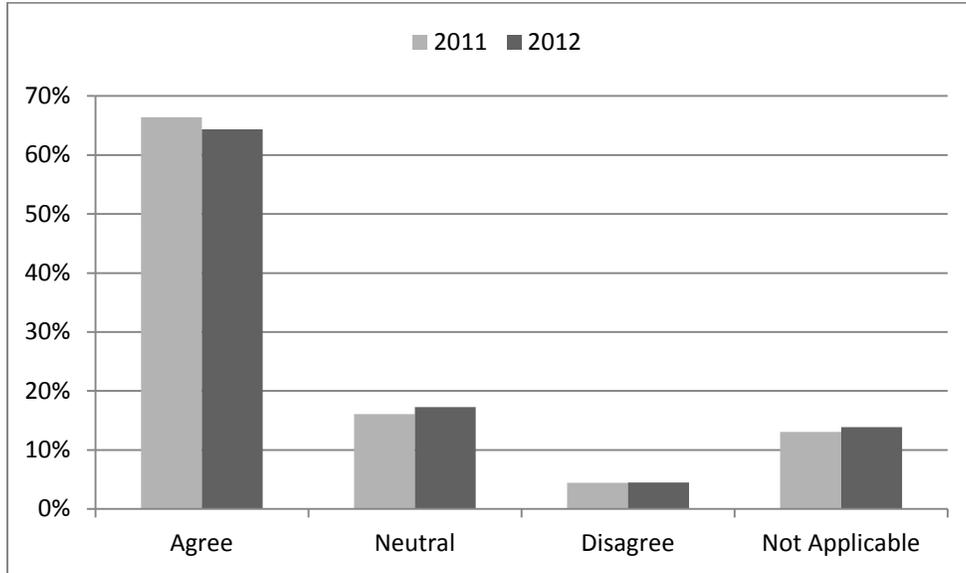


Table 58: Helpfulness of Technical Support

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1595	66.4%	1570	64.3%
Neutral	386	16.1%	422	17.3%
Disagree	107	4.5%	110	4.5%
Not Applicable	314	13.1%	338	13.9%
Total	2402	100.0%	2440	100.0%

The student would take another course with this online provider in the future.

Figure 45: Student Would Take Another Online Course

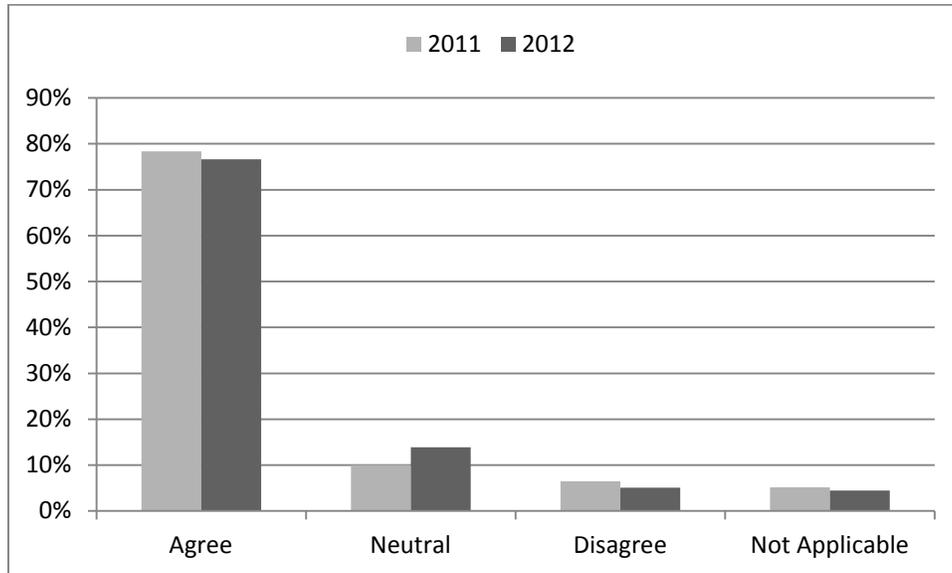


Table 59: Student Would Take Another Online Course

Response	2011 Responses	2011 Percent	2012 Responses	2012 Percent
Agree	1883	78.4%	1869	76.7%
Neutral	240	10.0%	338	13.9%
Disagree	155	6.5%	123	5.0%
Not Applicable	124	5.2%	108	4.4%
Total	2402	100.0%	2438	100.0%

Trends

Beyond the data presented in this report, we have noticed a number of trends in the online learning field during the past year.

PROVIDER CHANGES

In last year's report, we noted a trend toward provider consolidation. We haven't seen any significant merger activity amongst online providers since the last report, but we have seen a number of online school programs make major changes, including a cease in operations.

During 2010–11, K12, Inc. operated the Washington Virtual Academy (WAVA) program in three school districts: Steilacoom Historical (K–8), Monroe (9–12), and Omak (K–12). At the end of the school year, Steilacoom decided to end their program. Many of the students from Steilacoom later transferred to Omak.

The Bethel School District had been operating Bethel Online Academy as a multidistrict online school program. They also decided to cease operations at the end of the 2010–11 school year. The district has indicated that they plan to offer online courses to Bethel students, but they do not intend to operate a multidistrict online provider moving forward.

Last year, we also noted that programs affiliated with K12, Inc. had combined to capture 70.9 percent of the digital/online ALE FTEs in 2010–11. K12, Inc. remains a dominant presence in the state, capturing 63.7 percent of digital/online ALE FTEs in 2011–12. The K12, Inc. affiliated schools are:

- Insight School of Washington (Quillayute Valley School District).
- iQ Academy (Evergreen School District–Vancouver), operated by K12, Inc. subsidiary KC Distance Learning.
- Washington Virtual Academy (in Steilacoom Historical School District, Monroe School District, and Omak School District). Note that Steilacoom ended their affiliation with K12, Inc. after the 2011–12 school year.

STUDENT SUPPORT

OSPI's DLD has consistently expressed concern about the gap between online and non-online student performance and, as a result, has worked to better understand the key factors that affect student success in online learning, especially those factors that centered on student support.

During spring 2012, OSPI staff interviewed 16 online learning educators across the state, representing programs of various sizes and types. The questions focused on student preparation, teaching, support, curriculum/technology, and thoughts on the future. From our analysis of the feedback, we identified a variety of lessons learned, helpful strategies, and innovative practices. The results of this project have led to the following outcomes:

- Refined online student support information on the DLD website and created the "[Practices for Success](#)" web resource.
- Refined the online course support orientation and training material on the DLD website.

- Established a lens to review online provider approval criteria.
- Created ideas to consider for future program and system development.
- Provided input for legislative rule changes.

Survey results indicate that support strategies for successful online learning depend on the individual needs of the student, and it is important for the system to provide flexible options. Significant practices for student success include:

- A good match: Focus on the advising role is critical to create an appropriate pathway for each student.
- A good start: Emphasis on the initial contact and orientation with a teacher and/or mentor during the early weeks contributes significantly to student success.
- Strong academic and social support: Ongoing support is integral to student success in online learning and comes from a combination of people: mentor, teacher, parent, tutor, and peers.
- Quality teachers: Effective online teachers need to be prepared to teach online and be able to build relationships with students and families in alternative ways.
- High quality curriculum: As in all learning, students need relevant curriculum that interests them and keeps them engaged.
- Timely feedback: To keep engaged with online learning, students need ready access to a teacher/mentor and to receive timely and consistent feedback.
- A sense of community and partnership: A partnership among students, teachers, parents, administrators, and providers helps to foster a good learning experience.
- Stable technology: The technology platform must meet student, teacher, and administrative needs.
- Leadership: Administrative leaders must be supportive of online learning and commit resources, time, and technology.
- Mastery-based: Mastery-based learning helps students stay motivated and engaged.

In looking forward, online educators in Washington hope to see more project-based curriculum and collaborative learning opportunities for online students. Utilizing technology and social media are viewed as a means to create new and fresh learning options to engage students. In identifying various practices and strategies, it was noted that achieving success is affected by the availability of resources and how those are balanced to meet regulatory requirements.

The results of the online educator interviews can be found on the DLD Web site here:

<http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/options/districts/practices/>

Recommendations

Based on the data and analysis presented in this report, three recommendations are provided below:

First, online providers, including online school programs, should continue to focus on student support. We believe that student support is one of the key factors that lead to student success.

Second, the Legislature should restore full funding to ALE. The funding cut enacted by ESHB 2065 is scheduled to end after the 2011–13 biennium, and ALE enrollments should be fully funded moving forward.

Finally, the Legislature should act to reform ALE. Although not covered in this report, the State Auditor’s Office (SAO) has found approximately \$26 million in questioned costs in ALE programs. Although the bulk of the programs examined by SAO were not in the digital/online category, the fact remains that all of ALE is in need of an overhaul. ALE reform needs to:

- 1) Improve fiscal and academic accountability for ALE programs.
- 2) Provide districts with flexibility to offer a variety of educational options to their students, especially at-risk students.
- 3) Lessen the administrative burden of school districts by tailoring the programmatic, documentation, and reporting requirements to each specific delivery model.

Superintendent Dorn is proposing, along with the restoration of full funding, several ALE reforms that he believes will put ALE in a position to successfully meet student needs while maintaining accountability. We recommend that the Legislature act on this proposal.

Conclusions

Looking at the data presented here, we note that the 2011–12 school year saw the continuation of a number of online learning trends:

- The number of students taking online courses continued to rise, although not dramatically. 2011–12 saw an increase of 1,242 students taking online courses over the previous year.
- Demographically, the online student population was similar in 2011–12 to previous years.
- Three-quarters of online students are in high school, a rate nearly identical to previous years.
- Continuing a trend identified last year, the majority of online students do not take all of their coursework online and only 13.8 percent of students took enough courses (ten or more) to be considered full-time for the entire school year.
- Based on the total annual average headcount, non-resident students represented 67.2 percent of students enrolled in online ALE programs, a percentage virtually unchanged from the prior year.
- Although likely not a new trend, most of the large online school programs staff at a level below the 46/1,000 standard.
- There continue to be worrisome gaps in student achievement, measured either by state assessment or completion/passing rates.

There were also some findings that did not track with previous years:

- The number of students (measured either by FTE or headcount) participating in digital/online ALE programs fell from 2010–11.
- Students took 8.5 percent fewer online courses in 2011–12. Coupled with a fairly dramatic increase in the number of districts and schools reporting online enrollments, this suggests that online learning options are available in more districts than before, but that fewer students in each school are making use of the opportunities.

In conclusion, while the online learning landscape continues to be dynamic, the sector also maintains a high degree of continuity in terms of enrollment, demographics, and student achievement. Yet, it is cautionary to note that the field is very young and we have only three years of growingly reliable data. Future years will help to determine if the online learning practices identified here shall remain a part of the education landscape in Washington.

Appendices

Appendix A: Online Student Demographics

Available as a Microsoft Excel file at: http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2011-12/Appendix_A_Online_Student_Demographics.xls.

Appendix B: ALE Enrollment

Available as a Microsoft Excel file at: http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2011-12/Appendix_B_ALE_Enrollment.xls.

Appendix C: Non-Resident Student Enrollment

Available as a Microsoft Excel file at: http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2011-12/Appendix_C_Nonresident_Student_Enrollment.xls.

Appendix D: Assessment Results

Available as a Microsoft Excel file at: http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2011-12/Appendix_D_Assessment.xls.

Appendix E: Student Achievement

Available as a Microsoft Excel file at: http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2011-12/Appendix_E_Student_Achievement.xls.

Appendix F: Certificated Instructional Staff (CIS) Ratios

Available as a Microsoft Excel file at: http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2011-12/Appendix_F_CIS.xls.

For more information about the contents
of this document, please contact:
Karl Nelson, Director, Digital Learning Department, OSPI
E-mail: Karl.Nelson@k12.wa.us
Phone: (206) 616-9940

Download this material in PDF at <http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov>
or use a smartphone to scan this QR code for instant download.



This material is available in alternative format upon request.
Contact the Resource Center at (888) 595-3276, TTY (360) 664-3631.
Please refer to the document number below for quicker service:
13-0004



Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200